

Identifying Operational Management Practices in Temporary Evacuation Centres (PPS) for Flood Victims in Malaysia

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Abstract

Floods are among the most frequent and destructive natural disasters in Malaysia, often resulting in displacement, property loss and disruptions to daily life. To address the immediate needs of victims, Temporary Evacuation Centres (PPS) have been established to provide physical shelter and basic services. Aim of this study is to pinpoint the management procedures PPS took and analyze how successful they were according to those who experienced the flood. Data for the research were collected face-to-face by interviewing 12 respondents who had previously lived in PPS Kuala Nerus, Terengganu. Thematic analysis pointed out seven main aspects in managing a business: Basic necessities, foods and drinks, health and emergency help, upkeep of cleanliness, law enforcement, distribution of essential updates and security are all aspects the organizer is responsible for. Although most people were satisfied with the basic necessities and safety, matters such as crowding, if the rules are not always obeyed, delays in communications and a lack of medical help were also reported. The difficulties related to the epidemic were most severe for those who were children, elderly or disabled. The study demonstrates that better and more open management of PPS leads to good health and legal conditions in camps. By conducting these studies, we can help strengthen how we respond to disasters and improve overall help for those affected by floods.

Keywords: Temporary Evacuation Centre (PPS), Floods, Operational Management, Flood Victims, Malaysia

Introduction

Flooding is one of the most common natural disasters in Malaysia and it really impacts the people who get caught in it. The consequences are things like broken homes, danger to people's lives, job losses, risks to people's health, and a lot of worry and stress (Hussain et al., 2014). In response to these challenges, Temporary Evacuation Centres (PPS) have been set up so that people who have been flooded can stay there while waiting for things to get better. These centres are meant to help people who are displaced by disasters by giving them a safe

place to stay, making sure they have enough to eat, clean water, some clothes, medical care and protection (Bakar et al., 2011).

As front-line facilities in disaster response, PPS have the job of both providing shelter for those who need it and helping to coordinate all activities for official disaster management. They are responsible for providing many services in tough situations, such as getting food out, taking care of people's health, making sure things are clean, keeping people safe, and sharing useful and quick updates. However, these centres often struggle because of things like not having enough buildings, not having enough supplies, and not enough communication between agencies (Zawani & Ahmad, 2018; Said et al., 2013).

Although guidelines for the operation of PPS are out there, how these methods are used in real-life can be very different based on where the school is, who is in charge and what resources are available. Understanding how these centres are managed and run on the ground is important so that when floods happen, help comes quickly and is organized in a way that makes sure everyone can get support and help. The quality and scope of management practices are important because they help decide how well people affected by disasters have their needs taken care of while they are away from home.

Despite the fact that floods happen often in Malaysia, there is still not enough research that really looks at how the PPS actually works and how they deal with these situations. Therefore, this article looks at which management practices PPS uses, especially when it comes to making sure that people have enough food, medical care, clean water, a safe place to live, and easy-to-understand information. By focusing on PPS in Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, this study helps us understand what works well and what doesn't when it comes to handling disasters, which could help make future disaster planning and management better.

Literature Review

Flood Victims

According to Zainol et al. (2022), flood victims are people who go through different types of trouble when flooding happens, such as losing their homes, having family members die, getting hurt, facing problems with their mental health, and having their usual daily habits messed up. Floods not only harm people's homes and property, but also cause long-term emotional and mental strain, especially in children, older people, and other especially vulnerable groups (Kim et al., 2021).

A study by Said et al. (2013) also showed that people who have gone through floods have a really hard time getting things like food, clean drinking water, a place to stay for a while, and getting medical help. Insufficient food and poor living conditions can make both a person's mind and body feel even worse (Zawani & Ahmad, 2018).

Moreover, people who lose their homes because of flooding often have to stay in PPS places for a long time, until the area gets back on its feet after the disaster (Chan, 2015). This situation not only makes it hard for people to get their basic needs but also makes things hard for their mental and emotional well-being because everything can feel so unpredictable (Norizan, 2016).

Temporary Evacuation Centres (PPS)

PPS play an important role in helping managing floods in Malaysia. They give people places to stay for a while and also help by giving them things like food, clothes, and health care after a flood happens. Apart from giving people a safe place to stay, PPS are also supposed to help victims feel calmer and at ease and keep them safe while they are being moved to another place (Said et al., 2013).

However, PPS in Malaysia still have several problems to deal with. One main problem is that too many people are living in the same space, so there's often not enough room for a clear separation between male and female residents, which makes many people feel uncomfortable in their homes. This happens because PPS often use places like community centers or schools that were made for other things, not as a main plan for people to stay during a disaster. Additionally, because there aren't enough hospitals or clinics that are set up to help older people and others with disabilities, it's harder for them to get care and get around. This situation harms the health and well-being of people, especially the children, when they are forced to move from one place to another (Subri et al., 2018; Bernama, 2022).

Besides physical obstacles, people working in PPS also have to deal with problems in managing all the groups of workers and partners that are involved. Weaknesses in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and when managers don't follow the same rules often cause confusion and slow down aid getting to those who need it. For example, when different government departments don't work together well, it can result in each one doing the same job twice, which makes it take longer for important help to get to those who need it. This not only hurts people's bodies but also makes them feel more upset, especially those who are really in need of help (Wardah et al., 2016; Chan et al., 2016).

To enhance the functionality of the PPS, things like setting up Permanent Evacuation Centres (PPTs) that have better amenities have started to be put in place. These centres offer things like toilets, places to cook food, and rooms for kids to help people feel more comfortable and reduce some of the stress they might feel while having to live somewhere new. However, there are often many more people who need help than these centres can handle, so things like better planning and managing are needed all the time so that help can get to everyone no matter what is going on.

In summary, PPS are not just places where people can take shelter, but they also give emotional support and help people get back on their feet after a flood. Their effectiveness in doing this job really comes down to how ready everyone is, how well different teams work together, and if they follow the set rules and guidelines (Maidment et al., 2022).

Management Methods Implemented in PPS

Understanding the ways management is done in PPS is important to see if the centres are working well when they are dealing with floods. This section looks at what is already known about how food safety is managed, pointing out both the good points and areas where things could be improved in how Malaysian food businesses handle safety. Safe and efficient PPS management is important to look out for the health and safety of people who have been affected by floods. The selection of the right places to put a public protection system is one of the important parts of disaster management. A study by Ibrahim et al. (2022) found that the important things to think about when picking a site are safety, connection to care workers

and making sure there is good transportation. site safety, a good amount of time for evacuations and easy ways for people to move about. PPS should be put in places that aren't likely to have big slope changes or flooding, and it's best to put them near the homes of the people using them, so they can get out of harm's way quickly (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

However, lots of families in Malaysia who get hit by floods still have problems with things like roads and waste, which makes people go through a lot of stress (Zawani & Ahmad, 2018). According to Said et al. (2013), not having things like water and electricity makes it hard for people to go about their everyday lives and makes them feel stressed out.

Another common problem is that many PPS are crowded, making it uncomfortable, especially for people who are more at risk, like women, kids, and people with disabilities. Inadequate PWD-friendly facilities and having no separate places for different genders can make people feel uncomfortable and put them at more risk (Subri et al., 2016; Bernama, 2022). In addition, when different organizations in charge of dealing with disasters don't work well together, it makes the problems even harder. As explained by Chan (2015) and Yusoff & Aziz (2018), when different agencies each have some of the same jobs to do, it can take longer to help people affected by floods.

Authorities must make it easier for everyone to get to shelters and make sure that the most basic needs of victims—particularly groups which may need extra help—are taken care of first. Systematic evaluation and making plans are important so that people get safe and good housing, as well as access to any needed medical help (Kim et al., 2021).

Methodology

A qualitative approach is adopted in this study to gather detailed and reliable information on matters that cannot be measured with numbers and deal with feelings (Othman, 2009). The study was done at PPS Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, and it was noticed that most of the flood victims there were Malay. The researchers chose to include 12 participants for the study. As stated by Chua (2006), the credibility of qualitative research comes from others saying they have had similar experiences.

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants who fit the researcher's criteria. Individuals had to have direct involvement in flood, have been at a PPS for two or more years, be 18 years or older and be Malaysian citizens.

Ways to collect data were observation and interviewing the subjects in detail. The participants' thoughts were revealed to the researcher by carrying out these interviews (Alston & Bowles, 2003). The data was obtained through structured interviews, during which each person was interviewed individually.

As soon as the interviews were finished, all the responses were written down for analysis. Every transcript was looked at twice so that the researcher could grasp the main points and reach the point of saturation. Researchers used 'thematic analysis' that steps from transcribing data to identifying themes and grouping them in an organized way (Daama et al., 2023; Christou, 2022). Researcher carried out a clear analysis of the data and located the approaches that PPS take during floods using NVivo 14 software.

Findings

The analysis of the study uncovered a main point about managing PPSs, which resulted in the definition of seven important subthemes. The main things required are (a) basic necessities, (b) food and beverages, (c) assistance in cases of emergencies and health, (d) hygiene, (e) a set of rules and regulations, (f) sharing important information and (g) security. Every subtheme is discussed in detail, relying on information gathered through in-depth interviews with people who had experienced flooding in PPS facilities.

Subtheme: Provision of Basic Necessities

Providing people with tents, mattresses (bedding rolls), blankets, mats, baby diapers, and toiletry items is very important for running a PPS. These things must be given to flood victims as soon as they leave their homes. All in all, the interview findings point out that most people felt their necessities were provided in adequate amounts. Although the location for privacy varied, everyone acknowledged that the management did its best to give each family some privacy.

Majority of respondents mentioned that they were provided with tents, mattresses, mats, and blankets as soon as they got to the PPS. For example, respondent 1 noted:

"Thankfully, we did not need anything more than the basics. The camping place was equipped with a tent, a bed, and a mat for my group. This enabled us to take rest and be alone at times. I made sure to pack appropriate clothes for everyone, which made us prepared and we didn't have to get anything from the management..."

Respondent 2 added:

"The management gave us a tent, mattress, blanket, and mat. My wife had already prepared our clothes and brought them to the PPS."

Respondent 3 emphasized the management's commitment to ensuring comfort:

"When I was at the PPS, the management did a lot to ensure everyone was okay. For basic needs, they provided a tent for each family, as well as mats and mattresses."

Respondent 4 expressed overall satisfaction:

"Throughout my time at the PPS, I felt the management was excellent. In terms of basic needs, they provided tents, mats and enough clothing."

Some students said they were taken to classrooms, instead of putting them in halls, which made their experience calm and comfortable. Respondent 6 explained:

"For basic necessities, Alhamdulillah, it was okay. My family was given a tent in a classroom, not in the hall, so it was more comfortable, especially for my small children. The management also provided mattresses and blankets."

According to respondents 8 and 9, the facilities had the basic necessities but did not state their positions. Respondent 8 stated:

"Basic necessities like tents, mats, and clothes were sufficiently provided."

Respondent 9 remarked:

"Basic necessities such as tents, mats, and mattresses were adequately provided."

All in all, providing basic necessities to those affected by floods was the immediate concern of the PPS management. All families were given privacy and enough supplies to continue going with their routines within the PPS. While the location of these services was not the same in all places, it had little impact on how satisfied people were with their provision of basic needs.

Subtheme: Provision of Food and Beverages

The provision of food and beverages is another essential aspect of PPS management. Interview findings show that all respondents stated meals were provided three times daily—morning, afternoon, and evening. The management ensured that food supplies were sufficient and distributed according to the scheduled times. Most respondents expressed satisfaction with the food service, and no reports of hunger were recorded throughout their stay in the PPS.

Respondent 1 stated:

“They gave us food in the morning, afternoon, and at night. Alhamdulillah, the food was delicious and we never went hungry here. We had more than enough to eat.”

Respondent 2 shared a similar response:

“They gave us food in the morning, afternoon, and at night. There was plenty of food, so as an elderly person, I couldn’t even finish it all.”

Respondent 6 confirmed that the meals were consistently served on time:

“Meals were provided punctually morning, afternoon, and evening according to our mealtimes.”

Respondent 7 also expressed satisfaction:

“The management provided food three times a day, and there was always enough. It was never insufficient.”

Respondent 3 mentioned briefly:

“Food was provided.”

Respondent 4 highlighted the role of volunteers in the food distribution process:

“Food and drinks were enough. There were volunteers who constantly distributed the food, so nobody missed out.”

Respondent 8 acknowledged that the quantity was sufficient, though the taste didn’t always suit her preferences:

“The food was enough and served three times a day. Sometimes the taste didn’t match my preferences, but overall, it was sufficient.”

These statements collectively demonstrate that the regular and sufficient provision of food and beverages during the evacuation period contributed to maintaining the basic well-being of PPS residents. While there were slight differences in individual preferences, no serious complaints were raised regarding the quantity or frequency of meals.

Subtheme: Emergency and Health Assistance

In terms of emergency and health assistance, nearly all respondents stated that the PPS management provided sufficient basic healthcare services. This included the presence of medical teams, the availability of over-the-counter medication such as paracetamol, and immediate support in the event of health emergencies.

Respondent 1 noted that healthcare could be accessed through the registration counter:

“In terms of healthcare, if we’re sick with a fever, we can go to the counter at registration. The health officers will check and provide Panadol. So, there’s no problem regarding health here.”

Respondent 6 said something similar when it came to getting medical care quickly:

“For emergency and health needs, the management did provide assistance. There was a medical unit there that could be contacted if anyone was ill or needed urgent care.”

Other respondents said that medical staff were there and ready to help, just like what respondent 4 said.

“Emergency and health assistance were available, and there were medical personnel ready to help if anyone got sick or needed treatment.”

Some people told stories about things they’ve gone through with doctors. Respondent 3 shared:

“A doctor came to check on us. My 3-year-old child had a fever at the time, so we were very thankful that he got the medication.”

Respondent 7 commented, even though she did not personally require the service:

“Emergency and health assistance were there, but I didn’t need it because I was healthy.”

Overall, people felt that the emergency and healthcare services from PPS were good enough, well-organized, and easy to get to when needed. The presence of medical personnel made the flood victims feel safer, even if not all of them needed actual treatment.

Subtheme: Hygiene Management

It is essential to pay close attention to hygiene in Temporary Evacuation Centres (PPS) since it determines the safety and well-being of flood victims. Maintaining cleanliness stops diseases and creates a suitable atmosphere for those who are displaced. The finding of most the respondents during the interviews was that the cleanliness of PPS was satisfying. They were grateful for the teamwork among those evacuated and the support given by staff and volunteers.

Respondent 10 shared:

“Cleanliness was okay because all the evacuees here took care of hygiene together. I didn’t see anyone throwing food containers around as there were trash bins provided and cleaners regularly emptied them.”

Other respondents also expressed satisfaction with the hygiene conditions at the centre.

Respondent 2:

“Cleanliness at the PPS was okay...”

Respondent 3:

“Cleanliness was satisfactory because there were people cleaning the area...”

However, several respondents raised concerns about sanitation, especially in relation to toilet maintenance as the number of evacuees increased. Respondent 4 said:

“There were times when I felt they needed to be more attentive to cleanliness. Sometimes the toilets were full and not clean enough.”

This view was echoed by respondent 5:

“I think cleanliness could be improved because the toilets weren’t always well-maintained when there were too many evacuees...”

Respondent 8 also acknowledged this challenge:

“The management did monitor cleanliness, but with so many people, it was a bit difficult to keep everything clean all the time...”

Respondent 9 added:

“Cleanliness was monitored well, although it was a bit difficult at times because so many people were using the toilets.”

In summary, the cleanliness in PPS was generally at a satisfactory level according to most respondents. However, improvements are still needed, particularly in terms of sanitation maintenance during periods of high occupancy.

Subtheme: Rules and Regulations

Rules and regulations in a PPS are essential to ensure orderly management and the well-being of evacuees. However, interview findings revealed that most respondents stated they were not clearly informed of any formal rules implemented in the PPS. This led to a general perception that no specific regulations were enforced during their stay.

For example, respondent 1 remarked:

"The rules here are not strict because all of us evacuees can enter and leave the PPS freely."

A similar sentiment was shared by respondent 6:

"There are no specific rules so far, and we are free to go in and out of the PPS..."

Respondent 7 also stated:

"As long as I've been here, there haven't been any rules..."

Some respondents acknowledged that they were not informed of any regulations at all.

Respondent 2:

"There may be rules here, but I don't know because the management didn't tell us anything..."

Respondent 3:

"I don't think there are any rules..."

Respondent 5:

"There are no rules in the PPS..."

Respondent 9:

"I feel like there are no rules..."

Respondent 11:

"I don't think there are any rules..."

Respondent 12:

"It doesn't seem like there are any rules..."

Nevertheless, a few respondents did mention the presence of informal rules or basic guidelines related to cleanliness and safety. Respondent 4 shared:

"There are a few rules, like not littering and keeping the area clean..."

Respondent 8 added:

"There are also rules, such as maintaining peace, but nothing that really restricted us."

In conclusion, the findings suggest a lack of clear and consistent communication regarding rules and regulations to the residents of PPS. While some informal norms were observed, the absence of formal enforcement or orientation led to limited awareness among most evacuees. This highlights the need for better dissemination of guidelines to ensure mutual understanding, cooperation and security within the evacuation centres.

Subtheme: Dissemination of Important Information

The dissemination of important information such as flood updates, aid logistics, and safety procedures is a crucial component of effective PPS management. However, interview findings indicate that a communication gap existed between management personnel and PPS

residents. Most respondents stated that they did not receive formal communication regarding important updates from the authorities.

For instance, respondent 3 stated:

"During my stay at the PPS, I didn't receive any important information that was conveyed..."

Similarly, respondent 1 remarked:

"So far, no important information has been delivered by the management..."

Respondent 10 also said:

"No important information has been delivered yet; we just mind our own business here..."

Respondent 11 supported this:

"There's no important information dissemination either..."

Some respondents relied on volunteers or took the initiative to seek information themselves.

Respondent 2 noted:

"It's the RELA members who inform us when it's mealtime and when to collect food from the registration area..."

Respondent 12 added:

"We only get important updates when we go to the registration desk to ask for the latest flood information near our home..."

Nevertheless, a few respondents acknowledged that information was delivered through volunteers or the registration desk, albeit with occasional delays. For example, respondent 4 explained:

"Important information, such as flood updates and the current situation, was delivered well with the help of volunteers..."

Respondent 5 concurred:

"Important information is communicated well, usually through volunteers..."

Respondent 6 also said:

"Important updates, including flood developments and authorities' movements, were communicated, though sometimes a bit delayed..."

Respondent 7 shared:

"The management did share information, but I usually heard it from volunteers who came to check on us..."

Respondent 8 concluded:

"There was important information given, so we always knew what was going on..."

In summary, the system for delivering critical information to PPS residents was inconsistent and lacked a centralized approach. Since there was no official communication structure in place, a lot of residents felt cut off from the information they needed about the disaster. It is clear that having proper and easy-to-reach systems for communication in PPS guarantees that all evacuees remain well-informed and mentally stable during their displacement.

Subtheme: Security Management

Being secure is very important in PPS management, as it lets residents stay safe and relaxed during their stay. Respondents in this area reported a high level of security because RELA (People's Volunteer Corps), APM (Malaysian Civil Defence Force) and police were always present and kept patrolling the area.

Respondent 1 stated:

“Officers from JKM, JPAM (APM), and RELA are always here, so yes, I do feel safe...”

Respondent 2 remarked:

“I feel safe staying here because agencies like JPAM (APM) and RELA are always coming around to check on the place...”

Respondent 3 expressed appreciation:

“I feel grateful that RELA is here to ensure our safety...”

Respondent 4 also highlighted:

“Security is maintained because there are always security officers patrolling...”

Respondent 5 affirmed:

“Security is well-managed, and there’s supervision at all times...”

Respondent 6 noted:

“In terms of safety, there are personnel ensuring all of us are secure...”

Respondent 7 added:

“Regarding security, I do feel safe because RELA is watching over the area...”

Respondent 8 shared:

“About safety, I feel secure here. There is monitoring from the authorities and volunteers who make sure everything is under control...”

Respondent 11 remarked:

“Security is well managed by RELA, so I feel safe during my stay here...”

Respondent 12 confirmed:

“Security here is indeed good because there are police and RELA officers doing their patrols...”

Nevertheless, a few people noted a few issues with security inside the PPS and the fact that all guests could reach the area. Respondent 9 pointed out:

“Security management is adequate, although sometimes outsiders can freely enter and exit...”

Similarly, respondent 10 expressed:

“There are JKM, JPAM (APM), and RELA officers doing their rounds. The management is doing well in terms of security, but I still worry because there are so many families here. The potential security issues might come from among us, the evacuees...”

Overall, the overall security management of the PPS was highly appreciated by most respondents due to the help given by law enforcement and volunteers. Having them around gave people a sense that things were in order. Still, the authorities should pay more attention to problems related to safety within the evacuation centre to ensure a safer environment.

Discussion

Based on in-depth interviews with 12 respondents, I found that some basic things are done to help people in PPS, such as providing necessities, food and drinks, offering medical help and services, making sure everything is clean, setting some rules, giving out information, and making sure people are safe.

Most people said they got the basic things they needed, like tents, mattresses, blankets and things to keep clean. However, some parents and grandparents said they felt uncomfortable, mainly because the cabin was a bit too small for bigger families or older people. Overcrowded

sleeping areas made it harder to get a good night's sleep, which added to the emotional stress I was feeling. This matches up with the findings of Kim et al. (2021), who pointed out that giving people enough physical space in evacuation centres is really important for helping victims feel emotionally and mentally better. Therefore, PPS space planning should take into account the unique needs of people who might be more easily injured or have trouble getting out of the way, like children, older people and those with disabilities.

Regarding food, most people said they got three meals a day and that the food usually was enough to keep them full. Nonetheless, some people were disappointed that they couldn't have more variety in their meals or special food if they had certain health issues or were taking care of children. Inconsistent food quality and distribution can make things worse for evacuees and how satisfied they are during the whole evacuation process. Subri et al. (2016) said that it is important to make sure people get enough food and different types of food to satisfy everyone in the evacuation centres.

Emergency and health help were reportedly given by doctors and nurses who were there at the scene. However, a few of the participants said that the medical staff didn't come by very often, which made people with ongoing health issues feel worried. Ibrahim et al. (2022) said it is important to have health services that are easy for people to get and that work the same way in PPS, so that sickness cannot spread much and people get treatment when they need it.

Hygiene in PPS was pretty good, except a few people mentioned that some toilets weren't kept clean, especially in places where more than usual numbers stay. Poor sanitation can make people sick and make life tough to deal with. Zahari and Hashim (2018) said that when evacuation centres are not properly cleaned and hygienic, it can make it easier for people to get sick and hampers how well everyone in the centres feels.

In terms of safety, most people felt safe because they saw RELA and civil defence officers out helping and keeping an eye on things. However, there were worries that other people could get inside the PPS without being checked enough. Chan (2015) said that good security is very important to help keep people safe, especially women and children, when big groups of evacuees are moved.

Information sharing needed to be better as well. Some participants said that updates about what was happening with their immigration case were slow to come in or didn't give enough details. Inconsistent or late communication only adds to people's worry when they are evacuated. According to Yusoff and Aziz (2017), good communication really helps disaster victims understand what's happening and keeps them feeling less stressed.

In conclusion, while PPS did help people with many important needs, there are still big problems with having enough room, serving special meals, making sure people get proper health care, keeping things clean, keeping everyone safe, and giving out information in a clear way. These findings show that making PPS plans that include everyone, better teamwork between different agencies, and added mental health support are all really important to help with disaster management.

Conclusion

This study identified seven key operational components in managing PPS for flood victims in Kuala Nerus, Terengganu. These components are provision of basic necessities, provision of food and beverages, emergency and health assistance, hygiene management, rules and regulations, dissemination of important information, and security management. Most respondents were satisfied with the supply of essentials and food distribution. However, concerns were raised about overcrowding, inadequate sanitation facilities, unclear communication protocols, lack of formal rules, and limited access to timely medical care.

These findings show that while the structural and logistical operations in PPS were mostly functional, significant gaps still exist that directly impact the physical and psychological well-being of evacuees. The absence of clear rules, inconsistent information sharing, and sanitation problems can increase emotional stress and reduce the overall safety and dignity of residents, especially among vulnerable groups like the elderly, women, children, and persons with disabilities.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that PPS management systems be improved. This can be achieved by standardizing operational procedures, improving coordination among agencies, and adding trained personnel for psychosocial support. Additionally, providing a systematic orientation for evacuees, clearer enforcement of centre rules, and a strong internal communication system are crucial for a more inclusive and humane disaster response model. In the future, national disaster preparedness should focus on developing people-centered PPS models that combine physical infrastructure with emotional resilience strategies.

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