

Factors that promote resilience in vulnerable communities exposed to natural hazards

Bella Zhong¹, Shelly Makleff², Karan Varshney², Revathi N. Krishna², Lorena Romero³ and Jane Fisher²

¹School of Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; ²Global and Women's Health Unit, Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; ³Alfred Health, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Background

Building community resilience is a strategy that has been increasingly harnessed in the field of disaster risk reduction, to mitigate the growing effects of natural hazards on vulnerable populations.¹ Numerous factors have been proposed to promote resilience, including social capital, local knowledge and people-place connections.^{2,3}

Aim

This scoping review aimed to identify and describe the factors that promote community resilience in vulnerable populations that have experienced a natural hazard.

Methods

We searched four databases; Ovid Medline, EMBASE, CINAHL and Ovid PsycInfo; for English primary research studies published at any time. Eligible studies addressed community resilience or a related component among a study population that included at least one of specified vulnerable groups and that had been exposed to any type of natural hazard. The search identified 3401 articles, with 47 included after screening. Relevant information was extracted and a quality assessment using the Joanna Briggs Institute critical appraisal tools was conducted for each study by two independent reviewers.

Results

Initial analysis described the characteristics of included studies and identified knowledge gaps. Key areas for further research include understudied settings in non-Western contexts, hazards such as bushfires, and vulnerable groups such as sexual and gender minorities. There was a lack of longitudinal studies and studies conducted in later phases of community recovery and adaptation. Of the various factors thought to build resilience, social capital was the most commonly described, whereas local knowledge and people-place connections were less frequently discussed.

Conclusion

Community resilience is a growing area of research globally; however, there are many knowledge gaps where further evidence is needed to inform strategies to reduce disaster risk in vulnerable communities.

References

1. Mayer, B 2019, 'A Review of the Literature on Community Resilience and Disaster Recovery', *Current Environmental Health Reports*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 167-73.
2. Norris, FH, Stevens, SP, Pfefferbaum, B, Wyche, KF & Pfefferbaum, RL 2008, 'Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 127-50.
3. Berkes, F & Ross, H 2013, 'Community Resilience: Toward an Integrated Approach', *Society & Natural Resources*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 5-20.