

The impact on and changing nature of social capital through multiple disasters

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Multiple disasters pose significant challenges to Australian communities, affecting recovery, vulnerability to future disasters and community health. Social capital is integral to disaster resilience, yet our understanding of how it is impacted is under-researched in the context of multiple disasters. Existing social capital within communities is the foundation on where to support and develop strategies to strengthen it, and so a better understanding of how it is being affected is crucial.



Background

Australia is experiencing an increasing prevalence in multiple disasters, yet our understanding of how multiple disasters are impacting communities is in its infancy. Social capital is central to living with, adapting and building resilience to disasters, yet only limited research focuses on how social capital is being impacted by both single and multiple disasters.

Research Aims

The knowledge generated aims to add to the evidence base identifying how to better support communities maintain and strengthen social capital before, during and after multiple disasters.

Research Questions

The research explores in what ways the nature and operation of social capital is changing through multiple disasters, what impacts these changes are having on individuals and community and how these changes are affecting individual and community ability to build resilience to future disasters.

Methodology

The research follows a sequential exploratory design through a mixed methods approach. Firstly, interviews have been conducted in a case study community. Informed by the findings of the interviews, questions will then be designed for the University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey, in order to test generalisability of these findings.

Findings

The research is currently in the analysis phase of the interviews and research papers are being written on findings relating to:

- The strengthening of bridging social capital in a rural community who have experienced multiple disasters and the barriers to this translating into increased agency.
- The erosion of linking social capital and the changing thoughts and behaviours in a rural community who have experienced multiple disasters.
- Changes in social capital depending on the type, extent and severity of disaster.



Note. Tinnie Heroes Still (2023), by S. Freymark and J. Malecki.
Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbCDqhVIEBk>



Further information

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