



Original paper

Disaster Resilient Communities: Developing and testing an all-hazards theory

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Abstract This paper describes the assessment of the “all-hazards” capabilities of a theory of hazard preparedness based on identifying the personal- and social-level processes (community participation, collective efficacy, empowerment and trust) that interact to facilitate decision making under conditions of uncertainty. It is argued that because hazards differ in their characteristics and behavior, and thus their implications for what people have to do to prepare, any theory of preparedness needs to be tested for its all-hazards applicability. Data from people susceptible to experiencing tsunami, earthquake, wildfire and influenza hazards that differ substantially in their respective preparedness requirements were analysed using structural equation modelling. Analyses confirmed the ability of the model to contribute to accounting for differences in levels of hazard preparedness irrespective of the hazard under consideration. The paper discusses the practical implications of the findings for the development and application of risk communication and community outreach programs used to facilitate sustained hazard preparedness.

Key words earthquake, tsunami, wildfire, pandemic, community, empowerment, trust, preparedness, all-hazard

1. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, members of many societies live with the possibility of experiencing adverse impacts from significant environmental (e.g., volcanic, wildfire, storm, flooding, tsunami and seismic processes) and health (e.g., pandemic influenza) hazards. Recognition of this susceptibility has prompted the active pursuit of strategies to manage the associated risk. One important risk management goal in this context is encouraging people to prepare in ways that reduce or mitigate hazard consequences, enhance their capacity to anticipate what they might have to contend with and develop people’s ability to cope with, adapt to, recover from and learn from hazard events (Paton 2006). This translates into risk management preparedness strategies designed to encourage people to engage in activities such as critically discussing hazard issues, storing food and water, securing the physical integrity of their home and household items, and developing household and neighbourhood emergency plans.

Preparation plays an important role in increasing community and societal resilience. For example, taking appropriate steps to physically secure the house and its contents not only reduces the risk of injury

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