INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL WORK: POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

December 14, 15, 2009

National Taiwan University in collaboration with SIM University, Singapore
Resilience, Social Support and Psychological Recovery

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Introduction

- Human beings are resilient, able to endure, persevere in crises.
- Stress associated with disaster
- Socio-ecological coping resources associated with stress reductions and adaptation identified
- Factors vital to family resilience and reducing impact of disasters on individuals and community well being
- Paper discusses the concept of resilience and its relevance to psychological recovery
Introduction

- Paper discusses concept of resilience, psychological recovery following disaster
- Considers community and social contexts of recovery, as psychological factors interact with social and community variables to enable effective coping, and reinforces each other.
- Coming to terms with trauma and disaster thus involves psychological strengths as well as social relation or network support.
Introduction

- Resilience – a multidimensional phenomenon.
- The strengths approach emphasizes capacities and strengths in people and families in spite of the disasters and setbacks faced.
- Resilience is also conceptualized as an active process by which survivors are able to access strengths in some domains in order to secure recovery in others.
Concept of Resilience

- Evidence for the positive correlations between experiences of negative life events or adversities and a variety of somatic, social, cognitive, emotional and psychological problems.

- Experience of traumatic events, individual differences in outcomes
- Some survive, become stronger, others less resilient.
**Concept of Resilience**

- Abilities or resources impact individuals, enabling coping and functioning in spite of adversities.
- Resilience commonly viewed as the “ability to bounce back from negative experiences” and to flexibly adapt to the changing demands of stressful experiences.
Resilient individuals cope better and are flexible in dealing with stress and disasters (Friborg, Hjemdal, Rosenvinge, & Martinussen, 2003).

Resilience viewed as a measure of stress coping ability but does not protect one from negative life events. (Connor and Davidson, 2003).

Resilience may help intervention and prevent undesirable outcomes of adverse conditions faced by individuals (von Eye & Schuster, 2000).
Concept of Resilience

- As a personality variable, e.g., hardiness (Kobasa, 1979, 1982).
- Hardiness proposed to moderate between stress and health outcomes.
- As the construct ‘ego-resilience’, a personal, individual characteristic (Jeanne and Jack Block, 1980)
- As “the general capacity for flexible and resourceful adaptation to external and internal stressors” and “a personality resource that allows individuals to “modify their characteristic level and habitual mode of expression of ego-control so as to most adaptively encounter, function in, and shape their immediate and long-term environmental contexts.” Klohnen (1996)
Concept of Resilience

- As a protective personality factor which facilitates positive outcomes by acting as a buffer between individuals and risk factors or adversities afflicting their well-being (Holleran & Waller, 2003).
Concept of Resilience

- Operational Definition of the concept:
  - The ability to effectively implement positive, flexible and adaptive coping behaviours matched to different negative experiences while enduring stress.
- A resilient individual draws upon all of his or her personal and environmental resources.
- Resilience is not just a personality trait but also a dynamic and modifyable factor.
Concept of Resilience

- Resilience refers to the inherent qualities of individuals, families and communities to adapt to adversities and function within the context of adversity (Luthar, Cicheti & Becker, 2000).

- A resilient person is able to deal effectively with life events situations which present risks and use protective factors that contribute to resilience, ameliorate these risks.
Achieving growth and greater ability to deal with difficult challenges is the goal of intervention.

Resiliency is viewed as the individual functioning within the broader environment.

The interactions among risk and protective factors at an intrapersonal and environmental level are keys to resiliency.

These risk factors can be from a number of life stressors, or a single traumatic event (Rutter, 1993; Luthar, 1991).
Intrapersonal & Individual vs Interpersonal & Environmental

- **Intrapersonal** factors identified include cognitive factors and specific competencies.
- Cognitive factors include
  - optimism,
  - intelligence,
  - creativity,
  - humor, and
  - a belief system that provides existential meaning, a cohesive life narrative, and an appreciation of the uniqueness of oneself.

(Chang & Sanna, 2001; Werner, 1993; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004).
Intrapersonal & Individual vs Interpersonal & Environmental

- **intrapersonal** construct of resilience includes:
  - the psychological aspects of coping and the physiological aspects of stress.
  - From psychology and physiology are concepts of stress and coping, observations of individuals coping better than expected and actually improving as a result of adversity laid the groundwork for the construct of resilience.
  - Resilience focuses upon positive outcomes, not illness.
Intrapersonal & Individual vs Interpersonal & Environmental

- Competence, positive outlook and self knowledge are closely related to resilience.
- Competencies that contribute to resilience include a wide range of coping strategies, social skills, educational abilities, and memory above the average level.
- The intra-individual factors contributing to higher levels of resilience may be considered protective factors within the individual. (Rouse, 1991 as cited in Tusaie & Dyer, 2004)
Intrapersonal & Individual vs Interpersonal & Environmental

- Environmental factors include perceived social support or a sense of connectedness with others.
- Social support - an important factor in several domains of resilience (Masten, 1994; Rutter, 1987; Tosaie & Dyer, 2004).
- This includes both the quantity of social resources and the quality and process of relationships, and also the perception of support. (Pro ciiano & Hellers, 1983; Tusai & Dyer, 2004).
- Individuals are not a passive recipient of social support, but social support is a dynamic or reciprocal relationship.
Process Model of Resilience and Recovery

- Process Model, like the crisis model (Roberts & Ottens, 2005; Richardson, 2002) view one’s homeostasis as disrupted by stress and reorganization involves the availability and the use of coping resources to determine a new re-equilibrium.

- The resiliency model also starts with homeostasis within the individual that is affected by adversity, life events, and resources.

- The individual consciously or unconsciously reintegrates upon disorganization due to crisis which then result in growth, self-understanding, and increased resilience. Dysfunctional coping may result in reintegration with loss (Tusaie & Dyer 2004).
Ecological Model for Resilience and Recovery

- provides a useful approach to disaster or trauma recovery, effective social and psychological functioning (Harvey & Tumma-Narra, 2007).
- Research on Victims of Violence (VOV), trauma survivors’ experience from diverse contexts, at various points of recovery
- examine cross-cultural applicability of constructs and assessment tools developed (CHA, 2009, Harvey & Tumma-Narra, 2003).
Ecological Model for Resilience and Recovery

- Most survivors of disasters do not want counselling or psychotherapy.
- Need for social interventions to foster wellness and enhance resilience through social and community care.
- The ecological framework provides theoretical foundation for clinical care, community intervention and research.
Ecological Model for Resilience and Recovery

- Dealing with family relationship, family environment during crisis is highly stressful.
- Increasing awareness of factors associated with stress; care-giving is functional to coping.
- Study of resilience focus on the relationship between individual adaptation and stress, mediated by the availability and utilisation of coping resources and strategies within the family context.
Assessment and Measurement of Resilience

- The goal of assessment is to explore individual strengths and also the ecological networks that shapes one’s experience and capability to cope with adversity.

- Assessment and intervention should consider not just the signs and symptoms of distress but also the prevailing attitudes and values in society and in the client’s cultural contexts.
Assessment and Measurement of Resilience

- Chang (2003): resilience factors of a population should be found within the culture rather than adopting or importing from foreign sources.
- Resilience should be defined within the context of the particular culture and intervention in social recovery focus on factors that are pertinent to the context:
Assessment and Measurement of Resilience

- Competence, Positive outlook is related to optimism where one looks forward or expects better things in the future.
- It is an orientation to view matters in a hopeful way.
- Instead of viewing adversity as threat, it could rather be seen as a more positive light as challenge.
- Taken as a whole, positive outlook can be seen as a realistic perspective that takes in the challenges in life and yet maintains an optimistic viewpoint.
- Self-knowledge allows a committed individual to know not only what he or she is involved in but also why the involvement was chosen.
Role of Resilience in Disaster and Crisis Coping

- In studies of the crisis of domestic violence, resiliency plays a major role in the success of breaking free from violence and living productive and fulfilling lives.
- Resiliency can help people in disaster break free of the sense of helplessness and contribute productively.
Role of Resilience in Disaster and Crisis Coping

- Ability to make emotional connections with others is a fundamental ingredient of resiliency.
- It is vital for trauma survivors to draw meaning from their experiences and to extend this meaning to helping others, especially loved ones.
- The ability for the person to retrace their past and re-evaluate future goals is a key factor for resiliency and effective coping.
Building Resiliency

- The process of building resiliency involves both an internal & an external dimension.
- It is the ability to maintain a composure and external balance in relationship.
- There is a need for a workable problem solving strategy, moving from a ‘me’ to ‘us’; from ‘I’ to ‘our’ perspective.
- This also means both self confidence or self efficacy and faith in the community.
Building Resiliency

- A resolution and determination that we can survive this disaster, ‘no matter what may come our way’.
- A commitment to resolve problems.
- Trauma survivors reported that faith, love and hope are key factors in recovery from traumatic events.
- Promoting Resilience of the disaster affected population and use of psychotherapeutic techniques to enhance the natural resilience and strength in trauma victims are vital for the social-psychological recovery.
Building Resiliency

- The experience with the earthquake victims as recorded by Niaz (2006) demonstrated the positive effects of faith and resilience.
- Faith in God provides strength to overcome stress and promotes recovery from traumatic disorders.
- Faith perspective and core values provide the needed view of life to make sense of adversities faced.
Strengthening Family Resilience in Trauma and Adversity

- Strengthening relationships is a vital aspect of promoting resilience.
- Research conducted by author examined the psychosocial factors associated with individual adaptation to loss, crisis and illness (disasters).
- The results highlighted family relationship variables that contribute to family resilience.
Strengthening Family Resilience in Trauma and Adversity

- Clinical studies on parental adaptation found parents of ill-children had high levels of anxiety, depression or other symptoms of poor adjustment. (Kazak, et al., 1997; Speechley & Noh, 1992)
- The coping resources of these parents include family environment and parents’ marital relationship (Olson, Sprenkle & Russell, 1979).
- These enable the family to be more resistant and more able to adapt to stress.
- High family cohesion, expressiveness, low conflict > better parental functioning (Moos & Moos, 1981) that correlates with adaptation.
Strengthening Family Resilience in Trauma and Adversity

- A “tense home atmosphere”, present in crisis, is positively associated with poor physical and mental health.
- The family is vital source for individual growth, well-being, physical and emotional support.
- The quality of the relationships within the family play an important role in influencing adaptation (Kroneneberger & Thompson, 1992; Sloper, et al., 1991).
- Open, honest communication, family cohesion, emotional expressiveness, family stability and the lack of conflict predict coping.
- Social or emotional support, including marital satisfaction, are related to positive (Eiser, 1990a; Tan, 1999) adaptation to stress.
Strengthening Family Resilience in Trauma and Adversity

- The ratings of these families reflect Asian family values that emphasized the maintenance of harmony, high cohesiveness and low conflict.
- Singaporean families generally more collectivist so independence and expressiveness, may be moderated.
- Positive rating of marital relationship, the perception of less stress and a supportive family environment account for parents’ overall adaptation. The appraisal of stress also plays an important role in the outcome of the parents’ stress experience (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).
Strengthening Family Resilience in Trauma and Adversity

- For **social recovery** in disaster or crisis, whether within the family or imposed from without,
- **Early intervention, education and prevention** to strengthen the marital and family relationship, build the family’s value and culture for strong family ties, cohesiveness, positive expression in communication in the family environment, and the strengthening of family relationship can enhance the member’s resilience in the face of the challenges.
Strengthening Family Resilience in Trauma and Adversity

- The family buffer against stress and crisis and prevent secondary (e.g. development of PTSD after exposure to trauma), and tertiary (e.g., preventing the worsening of PTSD once it has emerged) effects of trauma and disaster (Harvey & Tummala-Narra, 2007).
How to build resilience?

- To deal with interpersonal aspects of resilience,
- **Enhance the social network.**
- Involve the “identification of the relationships and attributes of members, key actors, and groups that social networks comprise”.
- The presence of a strong marital relationship and a positive family environment can play a crucial role in cushioning the stress experience and adversity.
- Findings of my study affirmed that when facing a challenging experience e.g. parenting a child who is physically ill, the important factors are:
- how the parents appraise the stress of their situation, as well as a strong marital relationship and a positive family environment (Tan, 1999).
How to build resilience?

- As for tips on building personal resilience during disaster recovery, both workers and clients, can do the following:
  - Connect with others
  - Talk about your feelings and share your concerns with someone you trust
  - Reach out and offer help to someone else; accept help that is offered to you
  - Engage in social activities; spend time with others who share common interests
  - Build family cohesion and strengthen relationships
Tips on building Resilience

- *Foster an optimistic outlook*
- View change as a challenge or opportunity; think about how the future might be better
- Review your priorities; abandon unreachable goals and adopt new ones
- Be confident in your abilities; recall how you have successfully faced adversity in the past
Tips on building Resilience

- *Act purposefully*
- Retrace the past and plan for the future
- Develop realistic goals; take small steps toward those goals each day
- Avoid negative reactions; focus on actively coping with disaster-related distress
- Take good care of your body; eat nutritious meals and get adequate rest
Conclusions

- To build resilience and coping, social intervention aims to enhance personal competence, resources and positive interaction in family culture and environment.
- Social workers and counsellors can provide the needed personal development as well as the internal social support for families experiencing stress.
- A strong marital relationship enhances coping abilities and resilience of both caregivers and disaster survivors.
Conclusions

- As Asian societies develop into more caring communities the need is to provide active support for the people in crisis, especially the caregivers and survivors of disasters.
- Resilience is necessary to ensure effective coping in fast changing world, but especially vital in times of crisis and disaster.
Conclusions

- The strengths perspective that underlies the concept of resilience recognises that individuals are not only able to survive and endure, but also triumph over difficult life circumstances (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004).

- Recognising and building on empowerment and strengths could better the well-being of individuals and brings about growth.
Conclusions

- Identification of protective factors can help individuals at risk and provide opportunities for intervention to promote greater resiliency (Baruth & Carroll, 2002).

- By identifying why individuals and communities are more resilient than others, we could enable those who are more vulnerable to make their lives better.
Thank you