

Measuring Community Resilience: A Theoretical Approach To Its Assessment

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Autor de correspondencia.: Este artículo deriva del proyecto de investigación SIP IPN 20241786 y del año sabático 2023-2024 autorizado por el IPN REF: DG-2023-342-1-20 de fecha 22 de mayo de 2023 y de la estancia sabática CONACYT con número de solicitud 2023-000010-01NACV-00073. Ambas instituciones hicieron posible con recursos económicos para la investigación y, en consecuencia, de este producto científico.

Citation: Jesús Enrique Morales Rico et al (2024), Measuring Community Resilience: A Theoretical Approach To Its Assessment, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(7), 959-963

Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i7.6917

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This article approaches the measurement of community resilience from a theoretical perspective, providing a conceptual framework for its evaluation. Various definitions and dimensions of community resilience are explored, with emphasis on its importance for sustainable development and the capacity of communities to face and recover from adversity. An exhaustive literature review was used to identify the predominant models and methodologies in the current literature. The results highlight the need for integrative approaches that consider social, economic and environmental factors. Likewise, the practical implications of these findings for the design of public policies and community intervention programs are discussed. In conclusion, a comprehensive theoretical model is proposed that facilitates a holistic assessment of community resilience, highlighting the relevance of interdisciplinary collaboration and community participation in this process.

Keywords: community resilience, theoretical evaluation, sustainable development, public policies, community participation.

Introduction

In a world characterized by the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, social conflicts, and economic crises, community resilience has emerged as a key concept in the pursuit of long-term sustainability and development. A community's ability to anticipate, cope, adapt and recover from adversity not only determines its immediate well-being, but also its future development. However, measuring community resilience presents significant challenges due to its multifaceted and contextual nature.

This paper is framed in the need to establish a solid conceptual framework that allows a comprehensive assessment of community resilience. This study is based on an exhaustive review of the existing literature, identifying the main definitions, dimensions and models used in the measurement of resilience. Based on this analysis, it is intended to provide theoretical and methodological clarity, highlighting the practical implications for the design of public policies and intervention programs that promote more resilient communities.

The importance of this work lies in its integrative approach, which considers social, economic and environmental factors as essential components of community resilience. By proposing a comprehensive theoretical model, this study seeks to facilitate a holistic assessment, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and active community participation in identifying its strengths and vulnerabilities.

The main objective of this article is to provide a theoretical guide for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners interested in community development, offering tools to assess and strengthen resilience in various contexts. Through this approach, it is hoped to contribute to the creation of communities better able to face and overcome the challenges of the 21st century.

Methodology

To assess community resilience from a theoretical perspective, a documentary methodology has been adopted. This approach involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of existing information from various documentary sources, allowing a deep and grounded understanding of the concept and its dimensions. Montoya (2004). He emphasizes that "documentary research is conceived as a systematic review of the material to contextualize the object of study" (Gómez et al. 2015, p. 430).

This documentary methodology has allowed for the development of a robust theoretical framework and a detailed understanding of community resilience, providing a solid foundation for future research and practices in the field of community development. The combination of diverse sources and perspectives has enriched the analysis, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the factors that contribute to resilience and the most effective approaches to strengthening it.

Development

Concept of Community Resilience

Ramos et al. (2022). He stresses that "resilience is a term used by various disciplines, which explains how to transform from adverse situations to which people and communities are exposed." From this derives what community resilience is.

Community resilience refers to a community's ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from adverse events efficiently and effectively, maintaining and improving their well-being. "Resilience could be recognized as a process through which a group or community overcomes both natural and socio-political events and/or conditions of adversity, through the use of effective collective strategies" (Alzugaray et al. 2021, p. 184).

This concept has evolved over time, integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions that reflect the complexity of the challenges faced by communities. According to Norris et al. (2008), community resilience is a dynamic process that involves local and external resources, social cohesion, and effective leadership.

On the other hand, it is said that "community resilience is conceived as a social practice that has been studied as a dynamic process of successful adaptation to adversity" (Reich et al. 2010 cited in Botia & Preciado, 2019, p. 18)

Finally, Torres et al. (2021) highlights that:

Resilience is a measure of a community's responsive, resilience, and adaptive capacity to use available resources to contend, recover, and adapt to adverse situations, such as earthquakes, landslides, etc. This approach extends the ecological perspective of resilience to recognize people's ability to organize (p. 134).

Together, these definitions and perspectives provide a comprehensive and well-grounded view of community resilience, highlighting its evolution and the various dimensions that make it up. Community resilience not only implies the ability to recover from adverse events, but also the ability to anticipate and adapt to future adversities, through the effective use of resources and the active participation of the community. This holistic approach is essential for designing effective policies and strategies that strengthen the resilience and well-being of communities in the long term.

Dimensions of Community Resilience

To assess community resilience, it is essential to consider various dimensions that make it up. These dimensions provide a comprehensive understanding of a community's capabilities and vulnerabilities. The main dimensions are detailed below:

1. **Social Dimension:** The social dimension refers to social cohesion, social capital, and support networks within the community. A resilient community is characterized by high levels of mutual trust and strong active participation of its members in community activities. Social cohesion involves the existence of strong and collaborative relationships between residents, which facilitates mutual support in times of crisis. Social capital, understood as the social resources and connections that can be mobilized, is essential for resilience. Support networks, both formal and informal, play a crucial role in responding to and recovering from adverse events.
2. **Economic Dimension:** The economic dimension includes the economic capacity of the community to maintain and diversify its livelihoods. This encompasses financial stability, economic diversification, and access to resources. A robust local economy can better absorb the impacts of economic crises and natural disasters. Financial stability refers to the soundness of financial institutions and the availability of emergency funds. Economic diversification involves multiple sources of income, reducing reliance on a single sector and increasing resilience to shocks. Access to resources, such as credit, markets, and employment, is critical to economic resilience.
3. **Environmental Dimension:** The environmental dimension considers the relationship of the community with its natural environment. The sustainable management of natural resources and the ability to adapt to environmental changes are crucial aspects. Communities that responsibly manage their natural resources, such as water, forests, and land, are better able to cope with the impacts of extreme weather events and other disasters. Adaptive capacity involves the ability to adjust practices and behaviors in response to environmental

changes, such as climate change. This dimension also includes the implementation of sustainable practices that protect the natural environment and enhance the ecological resilience of the community.

4. Institutional Dimension: The institutional dimension implies the existence of effective structures and policies that support resilience. This includes governance, urban planning, and the availability of essential services. Effective governance is characterized by transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in decision-making. Urban planning must integrate resilience principles, such as disaster-resilient infrastructure and appropriate zoning. The availability of essential services, such as health, education, safety, and emergency services, is critical to a community's ability to respond to and recover from crises. Public policies that promote equity and inclusion are also crucial to strengthening institutional resilience.

"The scenarios for the application of community resilience have been diverse in consideration of the characteristics of the crises that communities have had to face and also the particularities of the context in which they have occurred" (Suazo, 2015, p. 33).

Assessing community resilience requires a multidimensional approach that considers the social, economic, environmental, and institutional aspects of a community. Each of these dimensions uniquely contributes to a community's ability to cope with, adapt to, and recover from adverse events. A comprehensive assessment of these dimensions can provide a solid foundation for the design and implementation of effective community resilience strategies.

Community Resilience Assessment Models

There are several theoretical and methodological models for assessing community resilience. Among them are:

1. **Community Capital Model:** This model identifies seven types of capital (natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built) that contribute to community resilience.
2. **Norris et al. (2008) model:** This model highlights four sets of community resources (economic capital, social capital, information capital, and competence capital) that interact to promote resilience.
3. **Cutter et al. (2008) model:** Focuses on vulnerability and responsiveness, identifying social, economic, institutional, and physical factors that influence community resilience.

Results

The literature review conducted for this study revealed several important findings on the measurement of community resilience and its theoretical assessment. One of the most outstanding findings is the diversity of theoretical approaches present in the literature. While there is a general consensus on the importance of community resilience, models and methodologies vary considerably. Some approaches focus on specific aspects, such as social capital or economic capacity, while others take a more holistic perspective, integrating multiple dimensions.

Most of the studies reviewed agree on the need to adopt integrative approaches to community resilience assessment. These approaches must consider social, economic, environmental and institutional factors simultaneously, recognizing the interdependence of these elements in the resilience of communities. It was highlighted that models incorporating multiple dimensions tend to provide a more complete and accurate assessment of resilience.

Another key finding is the relevance of community participation in the resilience assessment process. The active involvement of community members in identifying their strengths and vulnerabilities is essential to ensure that assessments are representative and useful. Community engagement also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the resilience strategies in place.

The findings of this study have important implications for the design of public policies. The need to develop policies that promote community resilience in a comprehensive manner, addressing both structural and contextual factors, is underlined. Policies should be flexible and adaptive, allowing for adjustments based on ongoing assessments of community resilience.

Measuring community resilience presents several methodological challenges. These include the lack of consensus on specific indicators, the difficulty in obtaining accurate data, and the variability in the contextual conditions of different communities. These challenges underscore the need to continue developing and refining theoretical models and methodologies to improve the accuracy and usefulness of resilience assessments.

As a result of the literature review and the analysis of the different approaches, a comprehensive theoretical model for the evaluation of community resilience is proposed. This model integrates the social, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions, providing a holistic framework for evaluation. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of community participation and interdisciplinary collaboration in the evaluation process.

In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the complexity and importance of community resilience assessment. The need for integrative approaches and the relevance of community participation in this process are evident. The proposal of a comprehensive theoretical model offers a useful guide for researchers, policymakers, and community development practitioners, facilitating the building of more resilient and sustainable communities.

Discussion

Community resilience assessment is a multidimensional challenge that requires robust theoretical and methodological approaches. The findings of this study highlight the complexity inherent in measuring resilience and the need to integrate various social, economic, environmental and institutional factors. The diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches found in the literature suggests that there is no single, universally accepted model for assessing community resilience. This variety reflects the multifaceted nature of resilience and the need to adapt models to specific contexts.

The adoption of integrative approaches is crucial, as it allows for a more complete understanding of community capacities and vulnerabilities. Models that incorporate multiple dimensions, such as social, economic, environmental, and institutional capital, provide more accurate and useful assessments. The relevance of community participation in the resilience assessment process is another fundamental aspect highlighted by the findings. The active involvement of community members not only ensures that assessments are representative, but also strengthens the sense of ownership and commitment to resilience strategies. This participatory approach is essential to develop effective and sustainable interventions.

Despite theoretical and methodological advances, the measurement of community resilience faces several significant challenges. The lack of consensus on specific indicators makes it difficult to compare studies and generalize results. In addition, obtaining accurate and representative data is a complex task, especially in communities with limited resources. The variability in the contextual conditions of different communities also poses a major challenge. The factors that influence resilience can vary considerably depending on the geographical, cultural and socioeconomic context. Therefore, it is essential to develop models and methodologies that are flexible and adaptable to different contexts.

The comprehensive theoretical model proposed in this study offers a holistic framework for the assessment of community resilience. By integrating social, economic, environmental, and institutional dimensions, this model facilitates a more complete and accurate assessment. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of community participation and interdisciplinary collaboration, key elements for the success of resilience evaluations and interventions.

This study opens up several areas for future research. First, it is necessary to develop and validate specific indicators that are applicable in different contexts and that allow meaningful comparisons between studies. Second, innovative methods for data collection that are accurate and representative should be explored, especially in resource-limited communities. In addition, future research should focus on the practical application of the proposed comprehensive theoretical model. It is important to evaluate its effectiveness in different contexts and adjust the model as necessary to improve its relevance and usefulness. Research should also be done on how public policies can support the implementation of this model and promote community resilience effectively.

Community resilience assessment is a complex process that requires integrative and participatory approaches. The findings of this study underscore the need to consider multiple dimensions and to actively involve the community in the evaluation process. The proposed comprehensive theoretical model provides a solid basis for future research and practice in the field of community development. By addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities identified, it is possible to build more resilient and sustainable communities, capable of meeting and overcoming the challenges of the 21st century.

Conclusion

This study on the measurement of community resilience from a theoretical perspective has revealed the complexity and importance of this concept in the context of sustainable development and the capacity of communities to face adversity. The exhaustive bibliographic review and analysis of the different theoretical and methodological approaches have made it possible to identify several significant contributions to scientific knowledge and development.

The main importance of this work lies in the identification of the need to adopt integrative approaches for the assessment of community resilience. By simultaneously considering the social, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions, this study underscores the interdependence of these factors and the importance of assessing them holistically. This integrated perspective provides a more complete and accurate understanding of community resilience, which is essential for the design of effective policies and programs.

In addition, the study highlights the importance of community participation in the resilience assessment process. Engaging community members in identifying their strengths and vulnerabilities ensures that assessments are representative and fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to resilience strategies. This participatory approach is crucial for developing sustainable and effective interventions.

One of the main contributions of this work is the proposal of a comprehensive theoretical model for the evaluation of community resilience. This model integrates multiple dimensions of resilience and emphasizes community participation and interdisciplinary collaboration. By providing a solid conceptual framework, this model offers useful guidance for researchers, policymakers, and community development practitioners. Its practical application can facilitate more accurate assessments and the implementation of more effective strategies to strengthen community resilience.

The study also highlights the methodological challenges associated with measuring community resilience, such as the lack of consensus on specific indicators and the difficulty in obtaining accurate data. These findings underscore the need to continue developing and refining models and methodologies to improve the accuracy and usefulness of resilience assessments. In addition, the variability in the contextual conditions of different communities highlights the importance of adapting approaches to specific contexts, which contributes to the development of more flexible and applicable models.

This study opens up several areas for future research. Developing and validating specific indicators applicable in different contexts is essential to advance community resilience assessment. Exploring innovative methods for data collection and evaluating the efficacy of the proposed theoretical model in various contexts are also key areas for future research. In addition, investigating how public policies can support the implementation of this model and promote community resilience effectively is crucial to translate theoretical findings into concrete practices and tangible benefits for communities.

This study provides a solid basis for future research and practice in the field of community development, offering a comprehensive theoretical framework and highlighting the importance of integrative and participatory approaches. By addressing the identified challenges and seizing the opportunities, it is possible to build more resilient and sustainable communities, capable of meeting and overcoming the challenges of the 21st century. Community resilience assessment, using robust theoretical and methodological approaches, is essential to promote the well-being and sustainable development of communities around the world.

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