

# Chapter 8

## A Review of Psychological Resilience as a Response to Natural Hazards in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*Natural hazards are potential threats to lives, properties, and the society at large. This chapter discusses psychological resilience as a strategy in overcoming the aftermath of natural hazards, which are known as natural disasters in Nigeria. Resilience consists of individual behaviours, cognitions, actions, and attitudes that enhance personal wellbeing. The ability to exhibit resilience is important in overcoming the adverse consequences of natural hazards. A review of the concept of resilience in this chapter covers an introduction to the concept of resilience and natural hazards, cases of natural hazards in Africa and Nigeria, conceptual definition and issues relating to resilience, theoretical underpinning, recommendation, and conclusion. The various factors that are critical to the development and utilisation of psychological resilience are discussed. Relevant authorities can thus be advised on the need to set up platforms on which communities can devise methods of educating individuals on methods of developing resilience in preparation for impending natural hazards.*

### INTRODUCTION

Hazards generally are situations or events that evoke feelings of fear, loss, pain and dejection. The occurrences associated with hazards are as old as history, but the prevalence of hazards is increasingly being experienced globally and in all spheres of life (Pryor 2012). A hazard is a threatening phenomenon that has the potential to bring about loss of lives, injuries, property damages, socio-economic disruption of life or environmental degradation (IB geography subject guide, 2011). Hazards can be described as the negative consequences of events attributable to natural or human forces. For instance, events associated with an earthquake, a meteor, and any other weather related event, could be causes of natural hazard. On the other hand, when factors associated with human activities are the major causes, then human forces are responsible.

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Natural hazards are phenomenal events that occur naturally in the physical environment through a series of slow or forceful events. These events could be geophysical (earthquakes, tsunamis volcanic eruptions); hydrological (avalanches and floods); climatological (high temperatures, droughts and wildfires) or meteorological (cyclones, ocean surges). One of the characteristics of natural hazards is that hazards have stored energies that may get dissipated and released with a high intensity. In that state, it causes grave damage to anything along its way. These types of hazards can lead to negative consequences for the people or the environment affected.

Nigeria's typology and ecological terrain may seem to have been speared some of the world's natural hazards compared to what obtains in other parts of the world. Amongst the different types of natural hazards, the most prevalent and experienced by Nigerians is the hydrological hazards (flood), followed by meteorological (ocean surges), while geophysical (earth tremor) is experienced at a mild but worrisome level in some parts of the country. Flooding, a major hazard in Nigeria has claimed lives and properties in a magnitude that requires urgent attention by stakeholders.

The history of flooding in Nigeria dates back to the 1900s. Flooding manifests when water flows across a land that is usually considered dry land. Floods also occur when a low land is situated adjacent to a body of water (Sada, 1988). This is because after a heavy rain fall, the likelihood of water from a stream or river overflowing its bank onto a low land is high. Notable flooding incidences in Nigeria (Ibadan, 1990; Akure, 2002, 2006; Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Adamawa, 2012; Niger Delta, 2012) have become a common phenomenon in the country. Flooding has recently been experienced across all regions of Nigeria and the aftermath has been catastrophic. This situation has prompted academic discuss and writings by experts (Aderogba, 2012a; Agbonkhese et al. 2014) from various fields in the physical and behavioural sciences. Usually, the area of discuss has been focused on the types of floods, typology of the areas affected, the relation of flood to sustainability and development (Adeogba, 2012), the history and effects of flooding (Tawari-Fufeyin, Megbuwe & Adams (2015); Agbonkhese et al. 2014; Okorodudu-Fubura, 2013). None has so far discussed the 30 issue of resilience and how victims can utilise it to overcome the losses associated with flooding.

Psychological resilience has been defined by Pecillo (2016), as a person's accomplishment in successfully overcoming the challenges encountered in various situations in life. It consists of behaviours that a person exhibits to achieve normalcy after a stressful experience. Resilience has been studied across domains and with various population groups such as children, sportsmen, and people living in coastal areas, victims of terrorist attacks and with patients of life threatening illnesses. In all of these situations, the resilience of the people involved was shown to be responsible for their capacity to withstand stress and overcome the challenges they faced. However, there is a paucity of knowledge on the relevance of psychological resilience in managing the aftermath of losses and trauma incurred and experienced by victims of natural hazards especially in Nigeria. The objective of this paper therefore is to review the subject of psychological resilience and how it can impact victims of national hazards in successfully managing social, emotional and economic losses caused by flooding in Nigeria.

## **BACKGROUND**

Events associated with natural hazards leave behind deleterious and inevitable consequences. This is because natural hazards are to a large extent, aftermaths of forces of nature that are naturally induced and out of the control of man. The incidences of natural hazards in Africa may be reported to be as com-

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