

Chapter 12

Resilience in Compound Disasters: A Case Study of KwaZulu–Natal Province in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of a corona-virus outbreak, reports of additional natural disasters were recorded in various cities across the globe. Resilience at such challenging times has gained attention as one of the key approaches to disaster management. This chapter reflects on the experiences of compound disasters in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. This study applies a case study research design and data collection and analysis involving a three-phase methodological protocol. The study used KwaZulu-Natal provincial level of government as a case focusing on disaster management and resilience. The main lesson identified relates to weaknesses in the provincial disaster management framework and processes, which shows concerns in the areas of training and development and stakeholder engagement. A disaster management framework is suggested for building resilience in the system. The study adds a valuable theoretical contribution to the growing body of knowledge that seeks an understanding of managing compound disaster and building relentless resilience in disruptive times.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, the prevalence of disasters has increased significantly in recent times. The world has witnessed various forms of such events ranging from natural disasters to a wide array of man-made disasters – climate and environmental changes or health, environment, economic, technological, market, and political etc. More recently, for instance, the global health crisis triggered by coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak shook the world so massively that it created alarm and panic. The impact was felt across all spheres of life, sectors, economies, societies, and organizations. While many governments across the world grappled with the containment of the virus, some countries simultaneously experienced severe forms of other natural disasters such as: Cyclone Harold which hit the Pacific countries; flooding in Manitoba province and Ottawa City in Canada; Typhoon Hagibis in Japan and Bangladesh; very destructive torrential rains in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa (Mishra et al., 2021; Ishiwatari et al., 2020). It is important to point out that some countries were simultaneously hit by more than one natural disasters. For instance, while Covid-19 pandemic imposed severe natural disasters in many communities across South Africa Mishra et al., (2021), other compounding natural disasters, sometimes emerged simultaneously with adverse consequences. The high complexity associated with the resulting compounding of the disasters, add new problems to further create and deepen long-term devastation, shock, and pose coordination and recovery challenges (Liu et al., 2022; Gissing et al., 2022; Munawar et al. 2021; Wu et al., 2022). For the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the net result has been the emergence of significant socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities. Thus, building adaptive capacity for continuity of lives and economic activities remains the most critical concern for all stakeholders, which highlights the importance of resilience in compound disaster management.

In this chapter, the compound disaster impacting the province of KwaZulu-Natal is a combination of Covid-19 pandemic (human/public disaster) and severe torrential rains leading to flooding and landslides (natural disasters). Vast literature document approaches to building resilience focusing mostly at the community-based level. From the human resource management (HRM) perspectives, it is without a doubt that human resources play crucial roles during uncertainties and dramatic and problematic environmental changes to reduce the irreparable damage. Studies focusing on the influences of HRM in the context of a stable environment have been extensively researched, but most importantly, these studies focus on aftershock management. There is a paucity in literature on HRM practices. Especially, the paucity generally applies within the context of environmental uncertainties associated with compound disasters. Edvardsson & Durst, (2021), emphasized and recommended the need to

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