

Understanding Community and Preparedness: Building Towards Bushfire Prepared Individuals.

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The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) position on community and bushfire safety states that appropriately prepared properties can not only survive a bushfire, but also provide shelter for the occupants (Killalea & Llewellyn, 2010). Therefore, how individuals in at-risk areas prepare for bushfires is an integral component in the protection of lives and property. Based on previous research, a simplified understanding of preparedness could be expressed as being preceded by individual and community based factors. However, there are a number of gaps in this understanding. The proposed research project aims to address the above issues by answering the following questions:

1. How do individuals understand/interpret the concept of community in relation to bushfire risk; and how do possible individual differences in this understanding relate to preparedness?
2. How do individual and community level factors interact in their influence on preparedness behaviour? More specifically, can a person-environment (PE) fit (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Muchinsky & Monohan, 1987; Terborg, 1981) approach be used to explain the interactions between individual level factors and community level factors, and their influence on preparedness?
3. Do these interactions vary in their influence on different types of performance (i.e. proficient, adaptive, and pro-active; Griffin et al., 2007)?

Methodology

Study 1 - Meta-analysis

A meta-analysis will be conducted on the PE fit literature to address the following question:

Can PE fit be used to differentially predict the three different types of performance from the Work Role Performance (WRP)?

The meta-analysis will allow for a retrospective application of the new WRP model onto previous PE fit literature to test the relationships between these concepts.

Study 2

Predictors: Understanding of community; PE Fit.

Outcomes: Different forms of preparedness. That is, whether preparedness behaviours are dependent on *reactive or proactive behaviours*.

Further Directions

Possible moderators in the below model will be investigated. Dependent on results research will focus on PE fit or different types of fit in more detail.

Variables Under Investigation

Understanding of Community

The construct of 'community' has been an important one in the development of modelling and understanding preparedness behaviours. With the growth of appreciation of the importance of community in disaster research, it is becoming important to clearly understand what is meant by the construct (Buckle, 1999; Phillips et al., 2011). Based on previous sociological research Phillips et al. defines the three main grouping characteristics as: *place, network and belonging*.

Person-Environment fit

PE fit research, from organisational psychology, is the study of behaviour resulting from the interactions between individuals and their environment (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Muchinsky & Monohan, 1987; Terborg, 1981). This concept could be applied to the hazard literature to examine the interaction an individuals has with their living environment. The basic premise of the PE fit literature is higher fit result in more positive outcomes.

Preparedness as Performance

The distinction between different types of performance allows for *movement from a reactive preparedness focus to a pro-active focus*. A model of performance would allow for the nuances of performance to be explored in a more complete manner (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Griffin et al., 2007). For example, the model of Work Role Performance (WRP; Griffin et al., 2007) distinguishes between three different types of performance: *proficient, adaptive, and pro-active performance*.

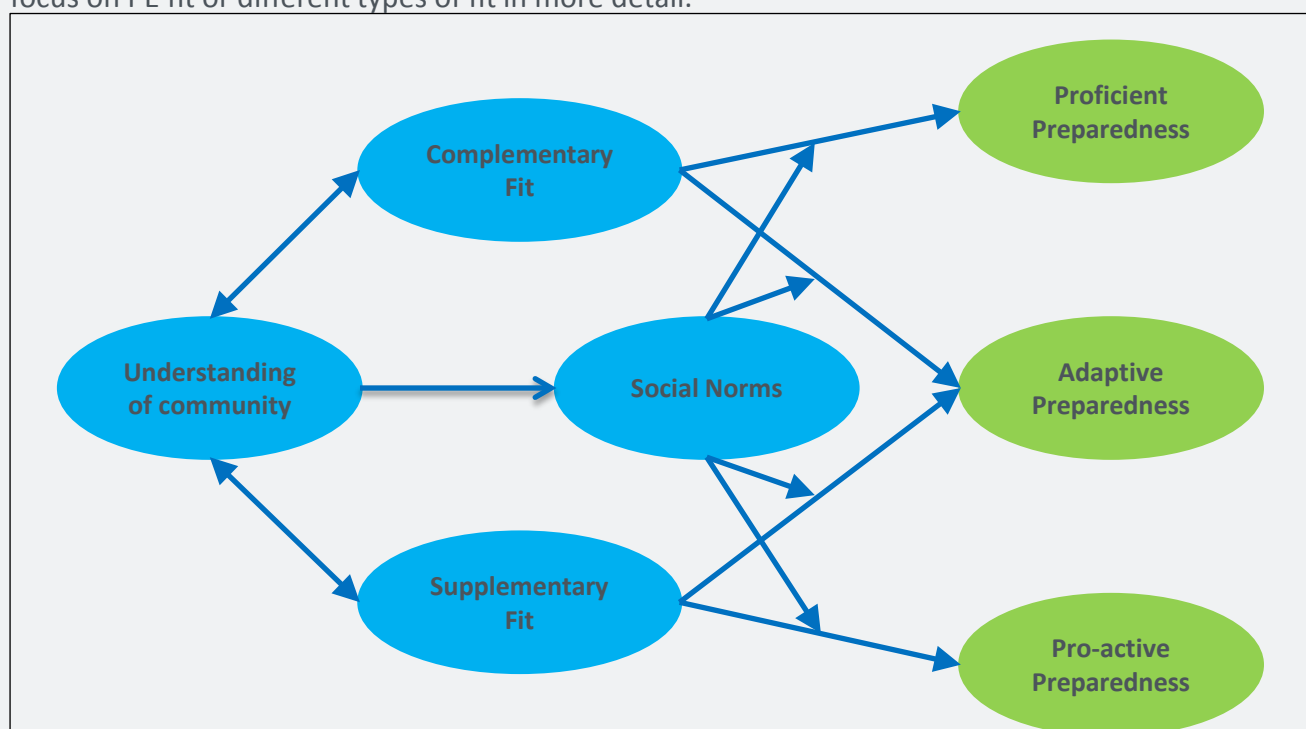


Figure 1. This figure demonstrates the anticipated relationships between the factors of: understanding of community; PE fit; and preparedness, including the possible moderating construct of social norms.

Implications

Filling these gaps in knowledge will not only increase the theoretical understanding of how community and individual factors interact in their influence on different categories of performance. It will also enable a more effective implementation of past knowledge in bushfire prone areas and help increase both individual and community preparedness.