



Editorial

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Psychosocial Research and Communities

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Abstract

This editorial aims to introduce the vision and mission of the newly established Journal of Community Psychosocial Research (JCPR). At the core, community psychosocial research must aim to holistically address, alleviate, and improve the psychological and social factors that negatively impact the health and well-being of individuals, groups, and organisations and the impact of this on and within communities. This editorial proposes six core outcomes of community psychosocial research, including the following: understanding the context of the community, exploring the community-level factors, highlighting disparities, formulating community-based interventions, engagement, and collaborative community research which should all be used to inform policy and practice that contribute to the enhancement of societal health and well-being outcomes. The importance of understanding the concepts of community, psychosocial research, and how community psychosocial research comes to exist, remains central to the impact these have on the health and well-being outcomes of individuals, groups, and organisations which all form part of communities in societies.

Keywords: community, psychosocial, psychosocial research, well-being, health

Introduction

JCPR aims to publish high-quality basic and applied research that focuses on the improvement of psychosocial health and well-being. The Journal originated from the Community Psychosocial Research (COMPRES) Focus Area, Faculty of Health Sciences at North-West University, South Africa as a vision and dream to provide scholars, researchers, students, and scientists with a scientific platform that gives voice to communities from a psychosocial perspective. In this context, this editorial seeks to clarify and provide our opinion on the concepts of community and psychosocial research, and how community psychosocial research comes to exist.

What is Community

The term 'community' is used widely in scientific literature; however, it is used differently by researchers across various disciplines (Cobigo et al., 2016). Since ancient Greek philosophy, the view of community has developed and changed with the evolution of human interactions and behaviours (Cobigo et al., 2016). Aristotle described community as a combination of parts having functions and interests in common (Miller, 2011). However, in the 19th century, German philosopher and sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, differentiated between community and society. According to Tönnies (1887/1957), the community is represented by individuals' close social relations (e.g., family, friends, and neighbours), whereas society refers to abstract associations among individuals who do not share feelings, and do not necessarily share space and time.

A community should, therefore, be characterised by collective culture, language, religion, geographical area, or any other distinctive characteristics that allow individuals to collectively be part of a larger system (MacQueen et al., 2001; Visser, 2012). Communities rely on social relationships and the interaction between individuals and the larger system (Visser, 2012), with effective systems that provide individuals with a sense of belonging and social support (Itzhaky et al., 2015). To highlight, communities are reported for having a significant impact on the health and well-being of their members (Itzhaky et al., 2015). Khumar (2020) defined psychosocial well-being as a multidimensional construct that encompasses elements of cognitive, emotional, cultural, spiritual, economic and social health that have an impact on an individual's ability to reach their potential to contribute to communities and ultimately society.

Psychosocial Research

Psychosocial research focuses on the interaction between psychological and social phenomena that play a role in individuals' behaviour, perceptions, and emotions (Redman, 2016). Psychosocial research calls for multidisciplinary research that collaboratively or singularly studies these interactions by means of various theories and research methods (Taylor, 2017). Therefore, psychosocial research attempts to understand how psychological and social factors interact and shape emotions, perceptions, and behaviours on individual and group levels. The implications of such research must aid in the development of interventions that contribute to the overall improvement in how individuals, groups or organisations function.

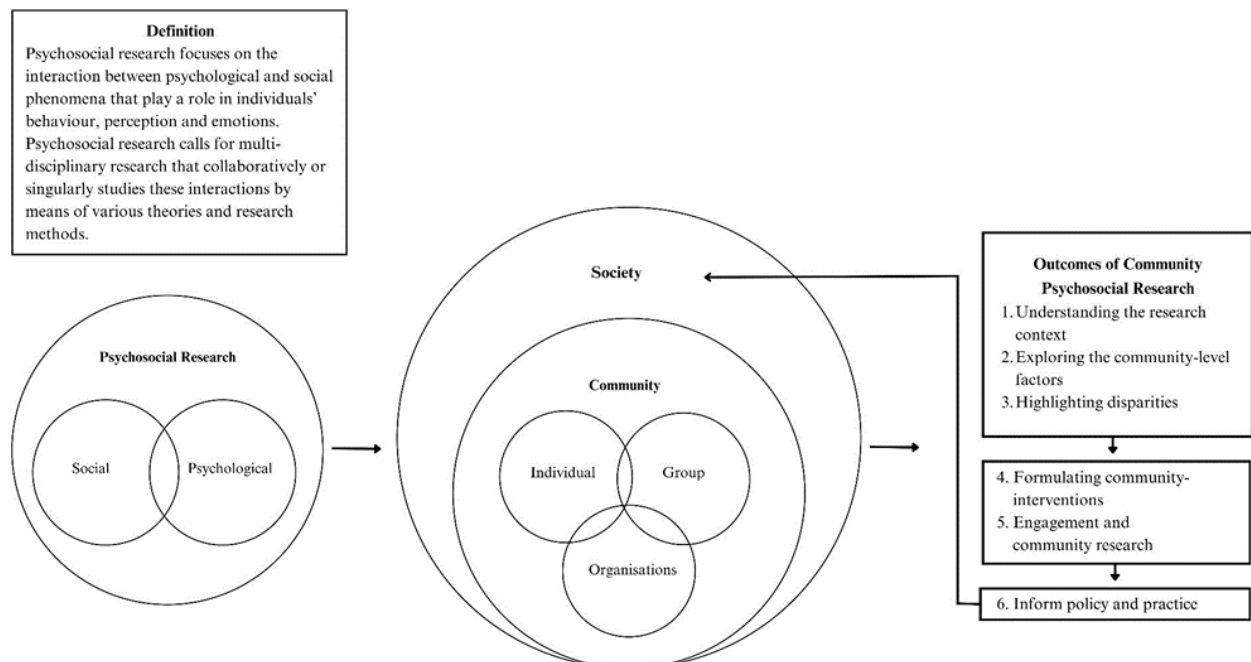
How We Define Psychosocial Research in Communities

Based on the above-clarified concepts, we as JCPR are of the opinion that psychological or social-related research conducted with individuals, groups, or organisations can be seen as community psychosocial research. Psychosocial research in communities should aim to collectively address, alleviate, and improve psychological and social factors that impede the quality of life and well-being of a community and individuals through various mechanisms. Firstly, psychosocial research should seek to improve our understanding of the psychosocial functioning of a community and individuals. Secondly, psychosocial research should aim to enhance the quality of life of both communities and the individuals within communities through collaborative research and action. Thirdly, psychosocial research should aid in the process of identifying and alleviating community issues that burden the quality of life, and to improve the well-being of communities and individuals. Lastly, it can provide communities and individuals with the necessary tools to effectively engage with each other and within the broader system.

Discussion

The concepts of community, psychosocial research and community psychosocial research are also visually presented in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. *Community Psychosocial Research Model*



This editorial would like to highlight the importance of community psychosocial research based on six primary outcomes that aid in the attempt to improve the well-being of communities and individuals. Firstly, the research should aid in the process of better understanding the context of any given community and the social factors that shape the well-being of the community and individuals (Fraser et al., 2018; García-Ramírez et al., 2014; Maseko et al., 2017; Wildman et al., 2019). Secondly, community psychosocial research helps identify community-level factors that shape the well-being of individuals (Greene et al., 2022; Maseko et al., 2017). Thirdly, this research should highlight the disparities prevalent in communities that further impact the well-being of its individuals (García-Ramírez et al., 2014; Wu & Li, 2013). Fourthly, based on the initial explorative nature of the three outcomes above, the need arises to develop community-based interventions that consider the aforementioned findings to effectively improve the community's health and well-being (Duncan et al., 2021). Fifthly, this outcome should be a fundamental part of the formulation and execution of community-based interventions namely: engaging and collaborative research practices that include the community as part of the research process (Jackson et al., 2018; Jaquez et al., 2013; Maseko et al., 2017; Paige et al., 2016). Finally, findings of explorative and intervention-based research could inform policy and practice to improve the well-being of other communities and have larger societal implications (Freudenberg, 2014; García-Ramírez et al., 2014).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we as the editorial team are of the opinion that the importance of understanding the concepts of community, psychosocial research, and how community psychosocial research comes to exist, remains central to the impact these have on the health and well-being outcomes of individuals, groups, and organisations which all form part of communities in societies.

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