

The Role of Resilience in Urban Poverty

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ABSTRACT

Urban poverty seems to be the breeding ground for resilience. However, the relationship between urban poverty and resilience has not been directly addressed. In this paper, we systematically review the current literature surrounding the interrelationship between resilience and urban poverty. Following the five steps proposed by Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen and Antes (2003) we reviewed 27 articles. We found the concept 'resilience' applied in a variety of fields (health, education, psychology, economy, environment, etc.). The urban poor face a number of serious threats such as drug use, family violence and community disorder. A set of resilient skills and characteristics such as self-esteem, communication and community services, allow these people to produce a positive outcome in the face of risks and threats. Resilient behaviour, in turn, enhances and increases their skills and protective factors giving the urban poor better chances when facing future adversity. In addition to the classic view of resilience as a response to a single adverse event, the literature introduces resilience as a common reaction of the urban poor to pervasive risks and chronic threats. This concept of sustained resilience allows individuals, families and communities, to survive and, eventually, to escape the threats of urban poverty. We conclude that urban poverty cannot be fully understood without first including resilience.

Keywords: urban poverty, resilience, literature review