

Problem Statement

K-12 schools face many threats which may require prolonged recovery. Of the limited research that exists, most work is focused on preparedness and response rather than long-term recovery. This is especially true for school shootings, which are both relatively infrequent and represent just a subset of threats facing schools. This paper conducts a broad examination of school recovery using an all-hazards approach to identify general K-12 school recovery needs, which can be used to inform school shooting recovery needs and practices.

Methods

Research Questions:

1. How do schools get back to “normal” after an unanticipated, catastrophic event?
2. What are the challenges facing schools in disaster recovery, and how can they be specifically addressed?

Data & Data Collection:

Systematic Literature Review:

We conducted systematic reviews of both the academic and grey literature to assess the research on K-12 disaster recovery that meets the following criteria:

- Written in English
- Published by an identifiable source (or a peer-reviewed academic journal/dissertation server)
- Related to K-12 schools or school communities recovering from disasters, accidents, crises, public health emergencies, or incidents of violence
- Focused on the United States (conceptual excluded)
- Directly addresses aspects of recovery
- Excludes threat/risk assessment and planning
- Describes the sample (conceptual papers excluded)
- Specifies and describes the event being evaluated.

Interviews:

We interviewed individuals involved in school recovery regarding their experiences with the needs and challenges schools face when recovering from disaster, including superintendents, principals, and emergency managers. This data collection is ongoing.

Findings

Systematic Literature Review:

	Cyber Attacks	Natural Disasters	Public Health Events	Violence	Not Specified	Total
Academic Literature	1	14	8	11	8	42
Grey Literature	2	27	8	10	17	64
Total	3	41	16	21	25	106

Academic Literature Themes:

- Limited research
- Emotional and psychological needs of students
- Additional stress put on educators
- These elements were particularly strong for violent events like school shootings
- The violent and deliberate nature of school shootings creates an especially heavy psychological and emotional toll

Grey Literature Themes:

- Limited research; focused on immediate response
- Obstacles to recovery (additional struggles of vulnerable communities, budget cuts after initial recovery period, grant restrictions and limitations of federal government)
- Importance of community
- Persistence of ongoing/long-term recovery based in trauma

Interviews:

	State-Level School Safety Individuals	School Principals	Total
Interviews to Date	4	2	6

Recurring themes from interviews conducted so far include:

- Recovery is a process that never ends
- Primacy of school building as recovery center
- Challenges around memorialization
- Navigating secondary traumas (space, sound, recollection)
- Limited-to-no guidance institutionally

Conclusion and Implications

Lessons Learned from the Literature:

- Recovery is a long process, made more difficult by recurring challenges
- Most prominent is the lasting psychological and emotional impact these extreme events have on survivors
- Lack of knowledge and guidance on long-term recovery
- Disparities and inequality impacts student recovery

Lessons Learned from the Interviews:

- Interviews conducted so far reinforced themes found in the literature – schools need access to resources, and the help of the community plays a big role in recovery and healing
- Even with these elements, recovery is ongoing
- The trauma of some events leave lasting psychological damage that never truly goes away, even after the school resumes operations.

What This Means for School Shooting Recovery

- School shooting recovery shares many similarities with recovery from other hazards
- Most crucial aspect is the ongoing mental health of school shooting survivors
- Implications for decision-making – what to do with school property that is otherwise undamaged?
- Even after the physical space has been dealt with, emotional recovery never ends

Future Directions

- Continue conducting interviews with school leadership, mental health practitioners, community groups representing survivors and families, and law enforcement and emergency managers
- Explore decision-making aspects of recovery: whether to erect permanent memorials and what to do with buildings that become symbolic of the event

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