

Introduction: Fort McMurray, a city in northern Alberta, Canada, has experienced multiple traumas in the last five years, including the 2016 wildfire, the 2020 floods, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Eighteen months after the wildfire, major depressive disorder (MDD), generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms were elevated among school board employees in the city.

Objectives: This study aimed to compare employees of the school board and other employees of Fort McMurray in respect to the impact the 2016 wildfires, the 2019 COVID pandemic, and the 2020 floods had on their mental health.

Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted in Fort McMurray from 24 April to 2 June 2021. Online questionnaires were administered through REDCap and were designed to capture socio-demographic characteristics, clinical as well as wildfire, COVID-19, and flooding-related variables. Mental health outcome variables were captured using self-reported standardized assessment scales. Data were analysed with descriptive statistics, Chi-square/Fisher's Exact tests, and binary regression analysis.

Results: Of the 249 residents who accessed the online survey, 186 completed the survey, giving a response rate of 74.7%. Of these respondents, 93.5% (174) indicated their employment status and were included in the Chi-square analysis. Most of the respondents were female (86.2%, (150)), above 40 years (53.4%, (93)), and were in a relationship (71.3%, (124)). The prevalence values for MDD, GAD and PTSD among respondents were 42.4%, 41.0, and 36.8%, respectively. There was a statistically significant difference between employees of the school board and other employees with respect to likely PTSD prevalence (28% vs. 45%, respectively, $p < 0.05$), although with other factors controlled for, in a binary logistic regression model, employer type did not significantly predict likely PTSD.

Conclusions: The study has established that likely PTSD symptoms were significantly higher in other employees compared to those of school board employees. Greater exposure to the traumatic events and a greater perceived lack of support from other employers might have contributed to the significantly higher prevalence of PTSD in other employees

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EPV0702

Views of “being vulnerable” among people attended by a Portuguese community association: a qualitative study

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Introduction: The concept of social vulnerability arises in the individual-collective relationship and points to changing social conditions, built on the basis of power relations. In this context, vulnerability can be directly related to the deterioration of social and civil rights, resulting in the weakening of individuals' citizenship. On the other hand, vulnerability can also lead to the deterioration of mental health. Stigma and discrimination generate low

self-esteem, decreased self-confidence, reduced motivation, and less hope for the future.

Objectives: This study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of vulnerability from the perspective of vulnerable people and identify strategies they used to reduce vulnerability.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Using a purposeful sampling method, data were collected in April 2022. The following criteria were applied in the selection process: (1) adults with a personal sense of vulnerability or the experience of being vulnerable; and (2) understanding the Portuguese language and having reflective capacity.

Results: A total of 12 respondents (6 male; 6 women) participated in study, mostly of middle-age. The manifestations of vulnerability reported by participants included being homeless, being a migrant, having an infectious disease, being drug dependent, experiencing a process of loss and grief and living socioeconomic difficulties. The data was summarized in terms of three major themes: (1) Conceptions about vulnerability, (2) Barriers imposed by vulnerability, and (3) Strategies for dealing with vulnerability. “Three subthemes were identified within the first theme: ontology condition that spreads, being alone “without network” and being exposed to external pressure (others). In the second theme, there were also three sub-themes: discrimination/stigma, difficulties in social reintegration, and “my condition is difficult”. Lastly, in the third theme, we found four subthemes: the ability to ask for help/seek support, motivation, and commitment to behavioural change, not exposing others to the same risks, and ignoring the disapproving look of others” (Laranjeira et al., 2022, p.5).

Conclusions: Our findings demonstrated that vulnerability is a dynamic process of being exposed to circumstances that influence individual outcomes. However, there is a conceptual gap: vulnerability is regarded negatively, but vulnerability also has the capacity to shift life priorities for the better.

References: Laranjeira C., Piaça I., Vinagre H., Vaz AR., Ferreira S., Cordeiro L., Querido A. (2022). Vulnerability through the Eyes of People Attended by a Portuguese Community-Based Association: A Thematic Analysis. *Healthcare*. 10(10):1819. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare10101819>

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Suicidal behavior and Autism Spectrum Disorder, what are the risk factors? – Case Report

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Introduction: Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by deficits in the ability to initiate and maintain social interaction, as well as a set of restricted and inflexible behavior patterns and interests. Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are at increased risk of suicidal behavior, including suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and death by suicide, as compared to the general population. Among the underlying causes, the co-occurrence of other psychiatric disorders, such as depression