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From Childhood Trauma to Civic Engagement: The Transformative Role of Family Resilience

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Abstract

This study investigates how childhood traumatic experiences influence adult civic participation through sense of community, and whether family resilience serves as a moderating factor. A total of 6,033 Hong Kong residents (female = 3,366, $M_{age} = 41.07$, $SD = 15.62$; age range = 25–65) were recruited between September 2023 and June 2024 using street intercept and snowball sampling methods. Participants completed a survey assessing childhood trauma, alongside measures of sense of community, civic participation, and family resilience. Using PROCESS macro Model 7 with 5,000 bootstrap samples, a moderated mediation analysis revealed that sense of community significantly mediated the relationship between childhood trauma and civic participation. This mediation was moderated by family resilience. Among individuals with low family resilience, childhood trauma was associated with reduced civic participation via diminished sense of community. In contrast, among those with high family resilience, childhood trauma was linked to *increased* civic participation through an elevated sense of community. These findings highlight the transformative role of family resilience in shaping civic outcomes after childhood adversity. Rather than merely buffering against negative effects, family resilience can enable individuals to reinterpret and mobilize early traumatic experiences as a source of civic motivation and engagement. The results highlight the importance of a multilevel ecological framework that considers the dynamic interplay between in familial and community resources in shaping civic outcomes following childhood adversity.

Keywords: adversity; childhood trauma; family resilience, civic participation; ecological framework