

EXPLICIT, IMPLICIT AND INTERNALISED

Bias and large bodies in disaster risk reduction

LESLEY GRAY^{1,2} DR JULIA BECKER² DR CAROL MACDONALD³ PROF DAVID JOHNSTON²

¹UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, WELLINGTON; ²JCDR, MASSEY UNIVERSITY, WELLINGTON;

³INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER.

CONTACT: LESLEY.GRAY@OTAGO.AC.NZ

INTRODUCTION

Bias is well recognised for e.g. in job recruitment: those we favour, those we are less likely to employ, and those who do not even get on the shortlist. Some decisions are purposeful and explicit, other decisions are unconsciously made (implicit). At a time when implicit bias relating to sexual orientation and ethnicity move towards a more neutral stance, implicit bias has increased for large bodied people (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019).

METHODS:

Sixteen large bodied people and eleven health or emergency managers participated in semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and inductive thematic analysis undertaken.

QUOTES

Explicit Bias

"there is prejudice, bias, from the medical community when it comes to large people. We are very much viewed as a burden and a liability, as opposed to just a regular citizen that needs help, just like everybody else"
(NZ'er Female)

somebody said to me the other day, "What would you do? A mother and two kids, or one fat person?"
(Emergency Manager Male)

Implicit Bias

"because of my disability - which is ridiculous, because like I don't have a disability - I have to wait till everybody's gone...I have to wait for someone to bring me a chair, and then I have to sit on... and I don't want to do that...I just want to go downstairs in my own time"
(NZ European Female)

People are just... it's very hard to fight your unconscious bias
(Emergency Manager Male 5)

Internalised Bias

Because I've put myself in this situation- like I'm so big ... Why should the government cater for minority people, when the majority are pretty healthy ... You put yourself in this situation, you get out of it.
(Pacific Male)

CONCLUSION

Despite substantial numbers of people in Aotearoa New Zealand with very high body mass (4.6% of total population; 19.9% Pacific People's; 10.4% Māori) (Ministry of Health, 2019) size, shape or weight is not adequately considered in disaster planning. Disaster triage or evacuation decisions by emergency managers may be influenced by implicit and explicit bias. Similarly, a larger bodied person volunteering for others to be 'saved' ahead of themselves may involve internalised bias. Individuals, health and emergency personnel need to recognise and explore their own biases and how these may shape planning and response decisions.

REFERENCES

Charlesworth, T. E., & Banaji, M. R. (2019). Patterns of implicit and explicit attitudes: I. Long-term change and stability from 2007 to 2016. *Psychological science*, 30(2), 174-192.

Ministry of Health. New Zealand Health Survey Annual Data Explorer, 2018/19 data.

PARTICIPANTS:

TABLE 1 - ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 - Semi-structured Interviews: participant characteristics (N=27)

Participants with high body mass index (BMI: Kg/m2)*	N	Experience of Disaster*	N	Location at time of interview (Region) all participants**	N	Emergency Management type of organisation***	N
Mild Obesity (BMI 30-34)	1	Christchurch earthquakes 2010-2011	4	Auckland	2	District Health Board/ Health/ Public Health Organisation	3
Moderate/Severe Obesity (BMI 35-39)	1	Kaikōura earthquake 2016	5	Bay of Plenty	3	Civil Defence/Local Government	3
Extreme Obesity I (BMI 40-44)	1	Seddon/Wellington earthquake 2013	5	Tairāwhiti	3	Ambulance	1
Extreme Obesity II (BMI 45-49)	4	Edgecumbe earthquake 1987	2	Hawke's Bay/ Wairarapa	4	Humanitarian/ Search and Rescue	3
Extreme Obesity III (BMI 50-54)	2	Edgecumbe Flood 2017	1	Manawatu/ Whanganui/Mid Central	4	Lay Rescuer	1
Super Extreme Obesity (BMI 55+)	6	Pacific Island: cyclones/ hurricanes/earthquakes	2	Wellington	7	Stated Ethnicity all participants**	N
Not Available	1	Tsunami evacuation	5	Marlborough/ Canterbury	3	Māori	4
Age*	N	Auckland earthquake	1	Otago	1	Pacific/Māori	3
Under 40yrs	5	No experience	1			Pacific	4
Under 60yrs	7					NZ European/Pākehā	13
Over 60yrs	4					Other	3

*Only the participants with high body mass (N=16); **Demographic details of all participants (N=27); ***Only the emergency management participants (N=11)



Image: World Obesity Federation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to all participants for their time and valuable insights. Massey University for funding travel associated with data collection and Otago University, Wellington for supporting some of the study time.

Image Credit: World Obesity Federation

Poster Graphic Design: Luke Pilkinton-Ching, University of Otago, Wellington