

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Children, Life Events, Resilience and Educational Outcomes

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The life circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are replete with hazards. Australian Indigenous children are more likely to live families experiencing long term poverty, labour market difficulties and exclusions, family deaths and illnesses, low security in housing and imprisonment of a family member than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Despite these adverse circumstances many achieve educationally. This study explores factors of resilience and educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Framed within an Indigenous research methodology a 'good education' as inclusive of academic achievement alongside cultural knowledges and community education. It explores Indigenous resilience whereby social, cultural and identity practices support positive adaptation among children despite the presence of developmental process hazards as its key concept. Our data is the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC), a panel study (2008 –ongoing) conducting annual waves of data collection from a representative sample of more than 1600 Indigenous Children and their families. Resilience data are modelled against an index of major life events data (modified for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life circumstances) from LSIC Waves 4-7. The analyses assesses the relationship between the cumulative and individual experience of major life events and children's educational outcomes. Results indicate that families and children with stronger cultural identities, higher levels of cultural engagement, broader extended family support and connection to Country demonstrate a greater ability to achieve good educational outcomes in the face of adverse life circumstances.