REVIEW

Resilience in Marginalized Communities During Crises: A Literature Review of Communication Scholarship

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Abstract

This article reviews how communication scholarship conceptualizes and examines resilience among marginalized populations in crisis contexts. Based on 45 peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2025, it maps the research landscape across journals, crisis types, and groups, and analyzes how resilience is theorized and enacted through communication. The findings show that while resilience is widely invoked, it is often framed narrowly as coping or adaptation. At the same time, the review identifies recurring communicative practices, including the reestablishment of normalcy, affirmation of identity, mobilization of networks, development of counter-narratives, and legitimization of emotion, that reveal resilience as a relational and discursive process shaped by inequality. Yet structural power dynamics, intersectional vulnerabilities, and community-led practices remain under-studied. The study contributes to the field by consolidating fragmented research, extending the communication theory of resilience (CTR) through critical perspectives, and outlining directions for future inquiry. By centering marginalized voices, it advances a more inclusive and equity-oriented agenda for crisis communication.

Keywords

communication theory of resilience; community resilience; crisis communication; digital media; inequality; marginalized populations; resilience

1. Introduction

Crisis scholarship has demonstrated that the impacts of disruption are not evenly distributed. Instead, they amplify existing social, political, and economic inequalities, leaving marginalized populations disproportionately vulnerable to disruption and harm (Kalocsányiová et al., 2023). Whether in the form of

pandemics, climate-related disasters, or political unrest, groups such as migrants, racialized minorities, and low-income communities often experience higher levels of exposure to risk while simultaneously facing systemic barriers that complicate their recovery (M. Kim & Doerfel, 2025; W. Liu, 2021). These unequal burdens make it essential to examine how resilience, commonly defined as the capacity of individuals, communities, or systems to endure, adapt, and transform in the face of disruption, is conceptualized and enacted among marginalized groups (Norris et al., 2008; Ungar, 2011; Walker et al., 2004).

Within communication scholarship, resilience has increasingly been recognized as a crucial lens through which to understand how individuals and groups navigate crises. The communication theory of resilience (CTR), developed by Buzzanell (2010) and further elaborated by Buzzanell and Houston (2018), has been influential in moving the focus from static, individual traits to relational and discursive processes. CTR conceptualizes resilience not as an inherent quality, but as something constituted through communication.

Over the past decade, communication scholarship has begun to expand the study of resilience across diverse contexts and address different perspectives: Previous studies have examined resilience as a process of constructing meaning in the aftermath of disruption; families, organizations, and communities use narratives, rituals, and discourses to normalize uncertainty, reframe challenges, and craft new pathways forward (e.g., Afifi et al., 2016). Another perspective emphasizes resilience as inherently relational. Studies have highlighted how interpersonal and family interactions, as well as organizational relationships, provide resources that allow people to endure and adapt (e.g., Kellas & Horstman, 2015). Research has also examined resilience in relation to how networks, such as interpersonal, organizational, and digital networks, facilitate access to information, support, and material resources during crises (e.g., Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019; Houston et al., 2015; Marlowe, 2015).

Although fruitful, resilience in marginalized populations remains insufficiently theorized within the field. Dominant approaches to resilience have emphasized psychological or individual-level traits and have privileged personal coping mechanisms over structural or relational processes (Buzzanell, 2010; Buzzanell & Houston, 2018). Such orientations risk overlooking the communicative practices and power dynamics that shape both vulnerability and recovery. At the same time, a growing body of work across journalism, health communication, public relations, digital media, and cultural studies has highlighted the complex ways in which communities draw on networks, narratives, and collective practices to respond to crises (e.g., Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2011; Goldstein et al., 2015; Jerolleman, 2021). One example is Lloyd's (2014) study on information resilience within refugee communities, which emphasizes the value of non-textual everyday communication, or collective coping strategies, in overcoming limitations in language and literacy.

The present article addresses this need by systematically reviewing scholarship on resilience in marginalized populations during crises. Specifically, it examines how resilience has been defined and theorized, how it is enacted through communication, and what these perspectives reveal about the broader relationship between crisis, inequality, and community. Through a systematic analysis of 45 peer-reviewed communication journal articles published between 2010 and 2025, the study synthesizes and critically analyzes how the field of communication has engaged or failed to engage with marginalized populations. By mapping key theoretical orientations, conceptual framings of resilience, and communicative practices across diverse crisis contexts, it contributes to ongoing efforts to enhance crisis communication by making it more equity-oriented, participatory, and contextually responsive.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: The following section presents the theoretical foundation, including the definition of marginalized populations, CTR scholarship, and the associated frameworks that guide the analysis. This is followed by a description of the methodology, including data collection and thematic coding strategies. The findings section then presents a synthesis of how marginalized groups are defined, the challenges they face during crises, the theoretical lens applied, and the ways in which resilience is conceptualized and examined through the lens of CTR. In the final sections, the review offers a critical discussion of current gaps in the previous literature and opportunities for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Defining Marginalized Populations in Crisis Contexts

Existing studies have shown that the effects of crisis are unevenly distributed across population groups, particularly among marginalized communities, due to differences in socioeconomic resources (e.g., Aquino et al., 2022), racial and ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Spence et al., 2013), and cultural value systems (e.g., Littlefield et al., 2021). Yet despite this growing body of research, definitions of "marginalized" populations often remain implicit in communication scholarship.

Research in adjacent disciplines has highlighted that marginalization emerges at the intersection of multiple social dimensions and is best understood as a relational condition rooted in structural inequalities. For example, Kuran et al. (2020, p. 1) argue that vulnerability is not a fixed attribute of particular groups but "the result of different and interdependent societal stratification processes that result in multiple dimensions of marginalisation." DeYoung (2021) offer concrete illustrations and note that groups more likely to experience adverse outcomes include ethnic and racial minoritized persons, women, children, sexual minorities, religious minorities, immigrants, and refugees.

Within crisis communication scholarship, I. Kim and Dutta (2009) critique traditional approaches for erasing marginalized voices by prioritizing restoration of the status quo. They call instead for a more nuanced, power-sensitive understanding of vulnerability and crisis communication. In this regard, Lloyd's (2014) concept of information resilience provides a useful lens for examining the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups. Information resilience emphasizes how structural barriers, such as literacy constraints, language differences, or limited digital access, shape communities' ability to engage in meaning-making processes. Information resilience therefore depends not only on individuals' adaptive strategies, but also on the broader communicative ecology: the inclusiveness of institutional communication practices, the accessibility of infrastructures, and the extent to which social systems support equitable participation in information flows. These constraints produce communicative vulnerabilities that intensify during crises, including restricted access to infrastructures, exclusion from public debate, and heightened exposure to harmful or stigmatizing narratives.

Building on these insights, the present review defines marginalized populations in terms of their social positioning within systems of power, which shapes their access to resources, information, and institutional recognition. From this perspective, populations become marginalized not only because they face greater risks, but also because they are systematically excluded from the communicative, informational, and institutional resources necessary for resilience. In the article, "marginalized populations" is used as an

umbrella term, while "groups" refers to specific identity-based categories and "communities" denotes relational or place-based collectivities engaged in shared practices.

2.2. CTR

CTR offers a communicative and relational framework for understanding how individuals, families, and communities respond to disruption (Buzzanell, 2010; Buzzanell & Houston, 2018). In contrast to psychological perspectives that conceptualize resilience as a stable trait or innate capacity, CTR defines resilience as a dynamic and socially constructed process. Rather than being something people simply "have," resilience is accomplished through discourse, interaction, and material practices that enable sensemaking, identity work, and the mobilization of social resources.

Drawing on G. E. Richardson's (2002) definition of resilience as "the process of reintegrating from disruptions in life," Buzzanell (2010) extends the concept into the communicative domain by showing how resilience is accomplished through everyday talk and relational practices. These communicative efforts allow people to sustain identities, restore a sense of normalcy, and build networks of care and support when facing trauma, loss, or structural inequality.

Buzzanell and Houston (2018) further advance CTR by framing resilience as an interplay between adaptation and transformation. Adaptation involves re-establishing stability and continuity, while transformation highlights possibilities for envisioning more just futures, expanding identity repertoires, and reconfiguring organizational and community practices. This dual emphasis positions resilience not simply as "bouncing back," but also as an ongoing negotiation between stability and change. Such a perspective is particularly relevant to marginalized populations, for whom resilience is shaped by structural inequalities, cultural norms, and unequal access to communicative resources.

Within this broader dynamic, where resilience involves both restoring stability after disruption and imagining possibilities for change, CTR identifies five communicative processes through which resilience takes shape. The first three processes primarily support adaptation, helping individuals and communities re-establish continuity and coherence: (a) crafting normalcy by creating routines that restore a sense of everyday life; (b) affirming identity anchors that provide stability and belonging; and (c) maintaining and using communication networks to access care, information, and solidarity. The latter two processes are more closely associated with transformation, as they create space for reinterpreting circumstances and pursuing alternative futures: (d) putting alternative logics to work by challenging dominant narratives or developing creative strategies; and (e) legitimizing negative emotions while directing energy toward hopeful, constructive action. Taken together, these communicative practices show how resilience is both a process of regaining footing in the present and a pathway for reconfiguring meanings, practices, and possibilities over time.

The present study employs CTR as a framework to investigate how communication scholarship engages with resilience in the lived experiences of marginalized populations during crises. In doing so, it asks the following overarching question:

> RQ: How does communication scholarship conceptualize and examine resilience among marginalized populations in crisis contexts?

To address this general question, the study develops two interrelated sets of sub-questions. The first set (RQ1.1–RQ1.4) maps existing scholarship on communicative resilience among marginalized populations across journals, crisis contexts, and groups to establish the empirical basis for analysis:

RQ1.1: Where is this research published, and how is it distributed across journals and subfields?

RQ1.2: Which crisis types are most frequently studied (e.g., disasters, health, environmental, political, economic, social justice)?

RQ1.3: Which marginalized groups are most often examined, and which remain understudied?

RQ1.4: What recurring challenges do marginalized populations face during crises from a communication perspective?

The second set of questions (RQ2.1–RQ2.2) turns to the conceptual core of resilience. The aim here is to analyze how resilience is defined and operationalized in the literature, paying particular attention to the communicative processes identified by CTR for broader theoretical and practical reflection:

RQ2.1: How is "resilience" defined across the literature, and what variations exist in its conceptualization?

RQ2.2: How are the five communicative processes of CTR articulated in the sample articles?

3. Method

3.1. Databases and Timeframe

The primary database used was Web of Science, specifically the "Communication" category, as it offers a curated set of peer-reviewed journals that represent the core of the field. Web of Science was selected for its strong coverage of flagship communication journals as well as interdisciplinary outlets relevant to crisis and resilience. The review covered the period 2010–2025, a timeframe chosen because the concept of resilience increasingly entered communication research during these years, following Buzzanell's (2010) CTR. The search was conducted in April 2025.

To identify relevant articles, the present review employed a keyword-based search strategy. All included studies were required to contain the three core terms: "crisis," "resilience," and a reference to marginalized populations. To ensure conceptual breadth and terminological variation, the search included alternative phrasings such as "marginalized group," "marginalized population," "vulnerable populations," as well as spelling variations, including both "marginalized" and "marginalised." The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English.

The initial search yielded 77 records. After removing 3 duplicates, 74 titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Articles were excluded based on three criteria. First, studies were removed if they focused exclusively on psychological or medical definitions of resilience without reference to communication, as

these do not align with the communicative orientation of CTR or our aim to examine resilience as a socially situated, interactional process. Second, because our focus is on marginalized populations, we excluded studies that analyzed resilience solely at the individual psychological level without considering community, cultural, or structural dimensions. Third, articles were excluded if they mentioned marginalized populations but did not study them as the primary research subjects. Following abstract screening, 68 articles were retained for full-text review. An additional 23 articles were excluded at this stage because communication served merely as background context or as a descriptive variable rather than a core analytical focus.

As a result of this multi-stage screening procedure, 45 articles were included in the final sample. Screening was conducted by the first author, with uncertain cases discussed with the second author to ensure consistency. No restrictions were imposed regarding article type during the initial search. However, following screening and inclusion criteria, the final dataset consisted solely of empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method) that examined communicative processes of resilience among marginalized populations:

- Records identified: 77
- Duplicates removed: 3
- Titles/abstracts screened: 74
- Full texts assessed: 68
- Excluded at full-text stage: 23
- Final sample: 45

3.2. Analysis

The study employed a thematic analysis that combined deductive and inductive approaches to address the two sets of research questions.

For the first goal (RQ1.1–RQ1.4), which aimed to map the overall research landscape, each article was coded for key characteristics, including journal of publication, crisis type, marginalized groups examined, recurring challenges, and theoretical frameworks employed. The inductive component followed Braun and Clarke's (2019, 2021) reflexive thematic analysis, which involves, first, familiarization with the dataset, second, generating initial codes, third, constructing candidate themes, fourth, reviewing and refining themes, fifth, defining and naming themes, and finally, sixth, producing the analytical narrative. This approach was selected because it supports flexible and interpretive analysis and foregrounds meaning-making. Coding began with open, line-by-line coding during the familiarization phase, followed by multiple iterative cycles of theme refinement in which codes were grouped, collapsed, or expanded to reflect recurring communication-related challenges experienced by marginalized populations.

For the second goal (RQ2.1–RQ2.2), which focused on the conceptualization and operationalization of resilience, the analysis was guided deductively by the CTR framework (Buzzanell, 2010; Buzzanell & Houston, 2018). CTR's five processes were translated into operational indicators for the present review. Specifically, the analysis traced how its five communicative processes appeared across the literature: (a) Crafting normalcy emerged in studies that described the reestablishment of routines, rituals, and everyday practices after disruption, such as the reopening of schools, the continuation of household

traditions, or the recreation of communal activities; (b) affirming identity anchors was visible where narratives of ethnicity, culture, gender, or generational belonging were mobilized to provide coherence, stability, and a sense of belonging during crises; (c) maintaining and using networks appeared in accounts of interpersonal, community, organizational, and digital ties that were activated to secure information, resources, solidarity, and emotional support; (d) putting alternative logics to work was evident when marginalized groups reframed dominant crisis narratives, resisted stigmatizing framings, or developed counter-discourses that allowed for more empowering interpretations of adversity; finally, (e) legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action was identified in studies where emotions such as grief, anger, or fear were not suppressed but instead acknowledged and redirected into solidarity, advocacy, or hopeful, forward-looking communication.

Coding was conducted manually in spreadsheets, making iterative adjustments to categories to ensure conceptual clarity and analytic depth. While formal intercoder reliability was not calculated, a subset of 10 articles was independently co-coded by both authors to cross-check consistency and strengthen interpretive reliability. A summary of the operationalization of CTR's five processes used in the present study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operationalization of the five communicative processes in CTR.

Process	Key question	Keywords	Example from sample articles
Crafting Normalcy	How do people recreate routines and shared meanings after disruption?	normal, normalcy, routine, continuity, everyday life, stability, familiarity, predictability, order	Migrant families during Covid-19 used shared cooking and online celebrations to maintain a sense of cultural routine (Häfliger et al., 2023).
Affirming Identity Anchors	How are identities (e.g., gendered, ethnic, familial) used to sustain a sense of self and community?	identity, belonging, self-concept, cultural identity, ethnic identity, gender identity, role continuity, community identity	Refugee youth affirmed ethnic identity through storytelling projects that strengthened cultural pride and belonging (Kalocsányiová et al., 2023).
Maintaining & Using Networks	What social or communicative networks are activated for support?	social network, social tie, support system, community, solidarity, trust, reciprocity, resource sharing, information exchange	Low-income communities relied on informal neighborhood WhatsApp groups to coordinate food distribution after natural disasters (Reid, 2013).
Putting Alternative Logics to Work	How do people reframe their situation or challenge dominant discourses?	reframing, counter-narrative, resistance, innovation, creativity, adaptation, transformation	Residents in peripheral regions used Google Maps to challenge dominant media portrayals of their communities as marginal, producing alternative representations that emphasized everyday life and cultural value (Shitrit & Noy, 2024).
Legitimizing Negative Feelings While Foregrounding Productive Action	How are emotions managed or mobilized for action and survival?	grief, anger, fear, hope, empowerment, coping, agency, survival, healing, optimism	Survivors of political violence publicly shared grief rituals online, transforming anger into advocacy for justice and social change (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018).

4. Findings

4.1. Summary of the Articles

Research on marginalized groups, crisis communication, and resilience has appeared across a wide range of journals, thus revealing the topic's interdisciplinary reach (see Table 2). The scholarship is particularly concentrated in the *International Journal of Communication* and *Journalism* (each with four articles), as well as in *Health Communication* and *Information, Communication & Society* (three articles each), which demonstrates the sustained interest of both journalism and digital communication studies in these issues. Other journals, namely *African Journalism Studies*, *Discourse & Society*, *Environment Communication*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Media, Culture & Society*, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, and *Social Media + Society*, have each published two articles on the topic. Beyond these clusters, single contributions appear in diverse journals like *Feminist Media Studies*, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, *Television & New Media*, and *The Translator*.

The wide range of publication outlets suggests that research on marginalized communities and resilience in crises cuts across journalism, media studies, health communication, public relations, and critical cultural studies. At the same time, particular traction is evident in journalism, health communication, and digital media research, where questions of inequality and access to information are especially salient.

Table 2. Distribution of sample articles.

Journal	No. of articles	Discipline/Subdiscipline
African Journalism Studies	2	Journalism/Area studies
Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies	1	Media & cultural studies
The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies	1	Digital media/New media studies
Discourse & Society	2	Discourse studies/Critical linguistics
Environment Communication	2	Environmental communication
European Journal of Communication	1	Communication studies (general)
Feminist Media Studies	1	Feminist media/Gender & communication
Health Communication	3	Health communication
IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication	1	Technical & professional communication
Information, Communication, and Society	3	Digital media/Communication & technology
International Journal of Communication	4	Communication studies (general/interdisciplinary)
Journal of African Media Studies	1	Media studies/Area studies
Journal of Applied Communication Research	1	Applied communication/ Interpersonal-organizational
Journal of Business and Technical Communication	1	Business & technical communication
Journal of Communication	1	Communication studies (flagship, general)
Journal of Public Relations Research	2	Public relations/Strategic communication
Journalism	4	Journalism studies

Table 2. (Cont.) Distribution of sample articles.

Journal	No. of articles	Discipline/Subdiscipline
Journalism Practice	1	Journalism/Media practice
Management Communication Quarterly	1	Organizational/Management communication
Media and Communication	1	Communication studies (open access, interdisciplinary)
Media, Culture & Society	2	Media & cultural studies
Mobile Media and Communication	3	Mobile & digital communication
Quarterly Journal of Speech	2	Rhetoric/Speech communication
Social Media + Society	2	Digital media/Social media studies
Social Semiotics	1	Semiotics/Media & communication
Television & New Media	1	Media studies/Digital media
The Translator	1	Translation studies/Intercultural communication

The sample articles conceptualize "crisis" as a multifaceted condition that cuts across a number of domains. Studies span several crisis contexts: disasters and public health emergencies (Baik & Jang, 2022; Blomberg et al., 2021; Lengel et al., 2023; Madianou, 2015), environmental and climate disruptions (Nishime, 2023; Todorova, 2022), political conflict and human rights (Hartnett, 2013; Paul, 2019), economic and policy crises such as austerity, the eurozone debt crisis, and the cost-of-living squeeze (Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2024; Mullen, 2021; Sarikakis et al., 2018), and social justice issues including police brutality, cultural appropriation, and workplace discrimination (Jones, 2020; Maiorescu-Murphy, 2021; A. V. Richardson, 2022). Table 3 summarizes the crisis types examined in studies of marginalized populations and resilience. This breadth of scholarship shows that questions of exclusion, vulnerability, and access are not limited to any single type of crisis, but recur in varied settings where inequalities shape both experiences of disruption and possibilities for resilience.

Table 3. Types of crises addressed in studies of marginalized populations and resilience.

Crisis	Examples of specific crisis	Example studies
Disasters & public health	Natural disasters, pandemic experiences	Baik and Jang (2022), Blomberg et al. (2021), Ji and Chen (2023), Lengel et al. (2023), Madianou (2015)
Environmental & climate disruptions	Climate change, ecological risk, grassroots activism	Nishime (2023), Todorova (2022)
Political conflict & human rights	Marginalization under state power, migration crises, oppression and resistance	Hartnett (2013), Paul (2019)
Economic & policy crises	Austerity, eurozone debt, cost-of-living crisis	Harkins and Lugo-Ocando (2024), Mullen (2021), Sarikakis et al. (2018)
Social justice issues	Police brutality, workplace discrimination, cultural appropriation, identity struggles	Jones (2020), Maiorescu-Murphy (2021), A. V. Richardson (2022)

The overview of crisis types provides an analytical baseline for understanding where and how communication scholarship has located marginalized communities within crisis research. The pattern reveals both concentration and absence: Acute crises (e.g., disasters, pandemics) dominate empirical attention, while long-term, structural, and digitally mediated crises remain comparatively underexplored. This imbalance underscores how prevailing crisis imaginaries shape theoretical understandings of resilience, which privileges adaptation to short-term shocks over engagement with enduring inequities.

4.2. "Marginalized" Groups in Crisis Communication Literature

Sample articles demonstrate that crises are not experienced in the same way, but are mediated by social hierarchies and pre-existing inequities. Rather than treating the public as a homogeneous audience, this body of scholarship examines how exclusion, vulnerability, and resistance are communicatively constructed across diverse communities. More specifically, the "marginalized" groups studied range from ethnic minorities (e.g., Matamoros-Fernández et al., 2022; A. V. Richardson, 2022; Schneeweis, 2025), colonized populations (e.g., Hartnett, 2013), women (e.g., Gilligan, 2012; Lengel et al., 2023; Quinlan & Johnson, 2020), and LGBTQ groups (e.g., Jones, 2020), to socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (e.g., Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2024; Mullen, 2021; Paterson & van der Bom, 2024), disabled persons (e.g., Hsu, 2024), international students (e.g., Ji & Chen, 2023), and migrant workers (e.g., Oktavianus & Lin, 2023; Paul, 2019; Pelsmaekers & Van Hout, 2020). An overview of these groups is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. "Marginalized" groups in communication journals.

Category	No. of articles	Example studies
Race/ethnicity	7	Deacon et al. (2024), Matamoros-Fernández et al. (2022), Nishime (2023), A. V. Richardson (2022), Schneeweis (2025)
Socioeconomic status	6	Harkins and Lugo-Ocando (2024), Mullen (2021), Paterson and van der Bom (2024), Waymer and Heath (2007)
Gender (women)	6	Gilligan (2012), Quinlan and Johnson (2020), Vardeman-Winter and Place (2017), Vochocová and Rosenfeldová (2019), Zhao (2024)
Sexual orientation/identity	3	Duguay et al. (2023), Jones (2020)
Disability	1	Hsu (2024)
Age (young/old)	2	Qiu and Kim (2010), Riddle et al. (2023)
Immigration status	6	Heywood and Yaméogo (2022), Ji and Chen (2023), Oktavianus and Lin (2023), Paul (2019), Pelsmaekers and Van Hout (2020), Todorova (2022)

A significant body of work focuses on identity categories related to ethnicity and gender. One central strand concerns ethnic and racial minorities, who frequently encounter stigmatization and stereotyping in moments of crisis. For instance, Asian communities became the target of "yellow peril" memes on TikTok during Covid-19 (Matamoros-Fernández et al., 2022), Black corporeal iconography functioned as protest journalism against systemic violence (A. V. Richardson, 2022), and Roma populations were scapegoated in European media narratives (Schneeweis, 2025).

Another prominent strand addresses gendered marginalization, with scholarship emphasizing women's experiences during crises. Women in Britain's public housing were stigmatized through reality television portrayals (Gilligan, 2012), Nigerian women experienced escalating gender-based violence during Covid-19 in the absence of institutional protection (Lengel et al., 2023), and mothers struggled with the silencing of postpartum experiences (Quinlan & Johnson, 2020). Great attention is also paid to LGBTQ communities, who navigate exclusion in both professional and social domains. Transgender employees, for example, must negotiate persistent workplace marginalization (Jones, 2020), while queer publics created alternative digital spaces such as Club Quarantine to sustain community during the pandemic (Duguay et al., 2023).

Beyond identity categories, scholars have examined groups marginalized by socioeconomic status, disability, and mobility. Media discourses on poverty often obscure structural inequities (Mullen, 2021; Paterson & van der Bom, 2024), while homeless individuals are frequently framed through narrow narratives of self-reliance (Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2024). Disabled persons with contested illnesses, such as long Covid, face epistemic injustice (defined by Fricker, 2007, as systemic discrimination of persons from marginalized groups related to knowledge creation) through ableist and misogynistic framings (Hsu, 2024). Similarly, migrant workers are depicted as simultaneously vulnerable and resourceful (Oktavianus & Lin, 2023; Paul, 2019), and Chinese international students, who during Covid-19 experienced exclusion through processes of stigmatization and social distancing, tended to respond to such exclusion through non-assertive coping strategies (Ji & Chen, 2023).

4.3. Challenges Marginalized Groups Face During Crises

The reviewed studies investigate the challenges of marginalized groups from the communication perspective, showing that marginalized populations face various challenges in crisis contexts, ranging from structural, social, and communicative challenges that often reinforce one another in ways that deepen vulnerability. Table 5 describes the types of challenges in crisis for marginalized groups.

Table 5. Types of challenges in crisis for marginalized groups.

Challenge type	Description	Illustrative studies
Institutional exclusion	Barriers to welfare, aid, and political participation; undocumented status blocking access.	Paul (2019), Waymer and Heath (2007)
Economic precarity	Crises deepen inequalities, forcing unsafe labor or informal economies.	Paul (2019)
Access to information & infrastructure	Language barriers, digital divides, lack of tailored communication; exclusion from vital crisis information.	Blomberg et al. (2021), Madianou (2015), Schneeweis (2025), Todorova (2022)
Symbolic neglect & negative representation	Erasure from debates, silencing by dominant languages, harmful stereotypes/scapegoating in media.	Gilligan (2012), Todorova (2022)
Exposure to violence	Heightened gender-based or structural violence in crisis conditions.	Lengel et al. (2023)

One recurring challenge lies in access to information and communication infrastructures. Marginalized groups are often disconnected from vital resources due to language barriers, digital divides, or a lack of recognition of their specific needs (Blomberg et al., 2021; Madianou, 2015). These challenges were evident among low-income survivors of Typhoon Haiyan, who faced "second-order disasters" when digital inequalities hindered recovery (Madianou, 2015), and among formerly incarcerated women, who were excluded from services when libraries and resource centers closed during Covid-19 (Blomberg et al., 2021). Language barriers further compound exclusion, such as in the case of Roma waste workers in North Macedonia who were unable to participate in environmental governance due to lack of translation (Todorova, 2022) and Roma communities across Europe who were denied healthcare access during the pandemic (Schneeweis, 2025).

Marginalized communities also face challenges of symbolic neglect and negative representation. Symbolic neglect erases voices from public debate and decision-making, which subordinates histories and rights to dominant narratives. The dominance of English in environmental communication in North Macedonia silenced local actors (Todorova, 2022). Negative representation circulates through harmful stereotypes that stigmatize and scapegoat. For example, during austerity poor women in British housing estates were vilified in television (Gilligan, 2012).

At the institutional level, marginalized groups confront systemic exclusion from welfare provisions, political processes, and professional fields. Precarious legal status or undocumented conditions frequently prohibit access to formal aid (Waymer & Heath, 2007). When crises amplify economic precarity, people are pushed into unsafe labor conditions or informal markets (Paul, 2019). Finally, crises expose marginalized communities to violence. As Lengel et al.'s (2023) study demonstrates, Nigerian women faced heightened gender-based violence during the pandemic without adequate institutional protections.

4.4. Theoretical Frameworks in the Study of Marginalization, Resilience, and Crisis

The reviewed literature demonstrates considerable theoretical diversity, which reflects the interdisciplinary nature of research on marginalized groups in crisis contexts. Many studies adopt critical and constructivist perspectives that foreground power, inequality, and representation. Drawing on Foucault's concepts of biopower and neoliberal governance, Gilligan (2012) analyzes how reality television in austerity Britain disciplines poor women through stigmatizing portrayals. Hartnett (2013) employs postcolonial theory to examine the rhetorical marginalization of Tibetans under Chinese rule. Nishime (2023) applies decolonial theory to show how racialized and colonized groups are disproportionately affected by climate change. Hsu (2024) brings together feminist theory to reveal how contested illness is framed through ableist and gendered stereotypes.

A second strand of scholarship builds on communication-centered theories. Critical discourse analysis is widely used to highlight symbolic exclusion, as exemplified by Pelsmaekers and Van Hout's (2020) study of how museums counter exclusionary migration narratives. Framing theory has been applied to analyze media portrayals of poverty and homelessness (e.g., Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2024; Paterson & van der Bom, 2024). Communication infrastructure theory helps explain how migrant domestic workers draw on storytelling networks during crises (Oktavianus & Lin, 2023) and how local media foster resilience in marginalized communities (Wenzel & Crittenden, 2023). A more specific crisis communication theory,

situational crisis communication theory, is used to study the public's responses to blame attribution in the Love Parade tragedy (Schwarz, 2012).

From a political and economic perspective, several studies employ theories and frameworks from political economy, governance, and social movement studies. For example, Qiu and Kim (2010) employ neoliberalism, statism, and immaterial labor theory to explore how East Asian youth reinterpreted the global recession through alternative media practices. Krüger (2023) situates Indigenous and peripheral communities within political economy frameworks of local media support and governance. Finally, theories of social movements are also used by, for example, Morse (2023), who introduces the concept of benevolent grief in mediatized mourning rituals as a pathway to recognition for LGBTQ and Muslim communities targeted by mass violence.

4.5. Resilience Through the Lens of CTR's Five Dimensions

Across the reviewed studies, resilience is articulated through broader practices and conditions that shape how marginalized groups confront crises. Most studies emphasize that rather than a fixed trait, resilience emerges as a process involving adaptation to uncertainty, the cultivation of solidarity and care, and the negotiation of institutional and structural constraints. At times it is framed at the individual or community level, and some studies emphasize empowerment, emotional strength, and collective support (e.g., Baik & Jang, 2022; Duguay et al., 2023; Nishime, 2023; Quinlan & Johnson, 2020; Wenzel & Crittenden, 2023). Others consider resilience at an organizational or systemic level, highlighting sustainability, independence, and responsiveness (e.g., Deacon et al., 2024; Krüger, 2023). Taken together, the sample articles conceptualize resilience as a situated and relational capacity, constituted through interactions between marginalized groups, their social networks, and institutional environments.

Therefore, the present study posits that resilience for marginalized groups is best understood as the capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from systemic inequalities, crises, and structural violence. Resilience entails a combination of emotional, social, technological, and policy-based adaptation strategies that empower individuals and communities to respond to adversity while sustaining or even enhancing well-being, autonomy, and social inclusion.

The following sections present how resilience is discussed through the five dimensions of CTR. These dimensions are crafting normalcy, affirming identity anchors, maintaining and using communication networks, putting alternative logics to work, and downplaying negative feelings while foregrounding positive emotions. Together they provide a structured lens through which to trace how adaptation, identity, and collective meaning-making are constituted across diverse crisis contexts.

4.5.1. Crafting Normalcy

According to CTR, the first communicative dimension of resilience involves crafting normalcy, as crises often create profound disruptions for individuals, organizations, and societies.

In the sample articles, normalcy first refers to the embodied and material aspects of daily life that are restored after disruption (Madianou, 2015). This may involve reopening physical spaces such as schools, workplaces, and marketplaces, or resuming habitual practices that ground individuals in familiar rhythms

(e.g., Madianou, 2015; Pelsmaekers & Van Hout, 2020). Furthermore, normalcy also involves a socially and individually constructed sense of continuity and control, which materializes through efforts to restore routine practices and collective understandings of daily life (e.g., Paul, 2019; Waymer & Heath, 2007). Oktavianus and Lin (2023), for example, provide a compelling example of Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, who maintained a sense of normalcy during the Covid-19 pandemic through everyday routines and storytelling networks. These Indonesian migrants continue familiar activities such as working and staying in touch with family, despite external disruptions.

As discussed in the sample articles, resilience emerges through deliberate efforts to reestablish normalcy: Individuals and communities recreate routines and shared practices that provide a sense of stability, familiarity, and control. These practices do not merely seek to return life to its pre-crisis form, rather they actively reestablish order and help people navigate uncertainty with a renewed sense of grounding and coherence.

4.5.2. Affirming Identity Anchors

The second core dimension of communicative resilience involves the affirmation of identity. When systems and structures are disrupted, individuals often turn to stable identity narratives to preserve a sense of coherence and purpose. The sample articles underscore that affirming identity, whether rooted in ethnicity and culture (e.g., I. Kim & Dutta, 2009; Paul, 2019), community (e.g., Duguay et al., 2023), gender (e.g., Jones, 2020; Quinlan & Johnson, 2020), or generation (Qiu & Kim, 2010), provides coherence and emotional durability that contributes to both individual survival and collective action.

As emphasized in the communication literature (e.g., East et al., 2010; Horstman et al., 2023), identity affirmation in resilience processes often takes shape through storytelling. People tell stories, recognize one another, and collectively rehearse shared identities that function as anchors. In the sample articles, the first narrative mechanism of identity affirmation is narrative coherence, which involves telling stories that align past injustices, present struggles, and future aspirations into a unified arc that renders experiences intelligible and emotionally manageable (e.g., Jones, 2020; A. V. Richardson, 2022). For instance, in anti-police brutality activism, the Black Lives Matter movement makes extensive use of corporeal iconography. Founded in 2013, Black Lives Matter is a global social justice movement that seeks to end systemic racism and violence against Black people, particularly police brutality (Howard University School of Law, 2025). Through protest images, videos, and symbolic juxtapositions, the movement centres the human body as a key visual element. These practices create a visual and emotional grammar that links individual suffering to broader historical struggles (A. V. Richardson, 2022). Identity anchoring can also connect to future imaginaries. Qiu and Kim's study (2010) shows how youth in Korea and China articulate culture, referring to youth subcultures where young people self-identify as "losers" to cope with inequality, competition, and limited mobility, alongside self-development narratives and class-based collectives as generational frameworks for making sense of foreclosed futures. These stories explain why they are where they are, who they are within the system, and what forms of collective action might be possible.

The second mechanism is social validation. Sample articles discussed how counter-public spaces—sites and methods that members of marginalized groups use to produce nondominant forms of knowledge (Jackson & Welles, 2015)—provide recognition, where being seen and believed transforms private shame or grief into

shared meaning (e.g., Heywood & Yaméogo, 2022; I. Kim & Dutta, 2009; Quinlan & Johnson, 2020). Paul (2019), for example, demonstrates how national press narratives surrounding Nepali migrant labor articulate shared cultural values and moral claims that both coordinate public recognition and mobilize advocacy.

The third mechanism is collective scripting: the transformation of emotional experiences into collective action through shared narratives, symbols, and roles (e.g., Baik & Jang, 2022; Duguay et al., 2023; A. V. Richardson, 2022). For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, US contact-tracing apps were reinterpreted as communal narratives of care and responsibility. This reframing allowed users to see themselves not as vulnerable targets but as responsible members of a caring community (Baik & Jang, 2022).

To sum up, through the affirmation or reconstruction of these identity anchors, individuals and groups sustain themselves and strengthen their collective capacity to endure adversity.

4.5.3. Maintaining and Using Networks

According to CTR, the maintenance and use of social networks emerge as a critical communicative practice of resilience. By activating interpersonal and organizational ties, individuals and communities build social capital, which in turn enables them to gain emotional support and mobilize resources. In this way, social networks are essential for resilience, as they link vulnerable populations to the resources necessary to adapt and transform in the face of systemic adversity.

Some sample articles examined the interorganizational context, showing how civil society organizations such as GoGreen and the Regional Environmental Center in North Macedonia mobilize dense interorganizational networks to secure project funding and collaborate with governmental bodies (Todorova, 2022). Regarding community-organizational infrastructures, Wenzel and Crittenden's (2023) study of local journalism initiatives during the pandemic shows how pre-existing relationships between media actors and community groups facilitated the rapid distribution of critical health information in multiple languages. Organizations such as Resolve Philly served as intermediaries and leveraged the established networks to reach underserved populations through community organizing and culturally responsive messaging. The Resolve Philly case illustrates that resilience emerges from prior investments in social infrastructure and communicative trust.

Many studies in the sample articles also highlight how digital platforms function as enablers of social network activation during crises. A. V. Richardson (2022) shows how the Black Lives Matter movement employed visual protest tactics and crowdfunding platforms to circulate affective narratives and mobilize resources through collective networks. Similarly, Qiu and Kim (2010) document how labor activists in East Asia leveraged blogs and mobile phones to coordinate legal action and express grievances. Furthermore, Madianou's (2015) concept of polymedia expands this view by showing how Filipino survivors of Typhoon Haiyan strategically navigated multiple digital platforms to connect with family, seek help, and receive updates. These nontraditional media tools enabled marginalized groups to assert political presence and organize in spaces often closed off by mainstream institutions.

Viewed together, these studies demonstrate that maintaining and using social networks, through both institutional and digital means, is an essential communicative strategy of resilience. Social capital, seen

through a communication lens, is not merely a resource, but also a medium through which emotional coherence, practical adaptation, and collective resistance are sustained during a crisis.

4.5.4. Putting Alternative Logics to Work

According to CTR, resilience is sustained through the ability to reframe situations in creative or counter-normative ways. This involves questioning dominant discourses and refusing to accept crisis narratives as fixed or inevitable (Tierney, 2014).

The development of alternative logics is especially visible when communities push back against deficit-based framings. Riddle et al. (2023) demonstrate how the so-called youth crime crisis in Australia has been framed through media tropes that reduce young people to problems in need of control. By refusing these narrow figurations, the authors argue for cultivating new social imaginaries of youth that foreground creativity, agency, and potential. In practice, this means listening to young people's own accounts and incorporating their voices into public discourse, thereby destabilizing moral panics and creating space for alternative futures.

A similar process unfolds in relation to poverty. Paterson and van der Bom (2024) reveal how poverty is constructed and circulated through language. Dominant discourses often frame poverty as an individual failing rather than a structural condition, which obscures systemic inequalities. By foregrounding lived experiences, the authors show how communities can develop counter-narratives that question entrenched ideologies.

In the sample articles, digital platforms are highlighted as important sites for putting alternative logics to work. Shitrit and Noy (2024) reveal how user-generated content on Google Maps reconfigures the representation of peripheral spaces in Israel. Whereas traditional media often depict these spaces through lenses of neglect, insecurity, or marginality, local users employ digital mapping to offer alternative depictions that emphasize cultural vitality, everyday life, and communal value. These bottom-up performances exemplify how ordinary digital practices can reframe crisis-inflected geographies into spaces of belonging, pride, and resilience.

Reframing is equally crucial in intimate and embodied contexts. Quinlan and Johnson (2020) study the postpartum period, discussing and contesting the dominant expectations that define good motherhood in rigid and unattainable ways. By narrating their experiences of anxiety, exhaustion, and systemic failure, and by connecting with others on social media, the women challenge normative discourses of effortless and self-sacrificing motherhood. Their insistence that self-care is a legitimate and necessary practice reframes vulnerability as a site of strength and solidarity. This alternative logic shows that survival and resilience are not about silence or stoicism, but about acknowledging difficulty and mobilizing networks of support.

These examples demonstrate that resilience also includes the capacity to reframe crises in ways that challenge established norms. Alternative logics provide tools for individuals and communities to develop new interpretive frameworks that allow them to make sense of their circumstances differently and carve out spaces of agency (Chandler, 2014). By shifting perspective, actors challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and create openings for alternative futures (Buzzanell, 2010; Houston et al., 2015).

4.5.5. Psychological Anchoring and Emotional Regulation

CTR legitimizes negative feelings such as grief, fear, or anger during times of crisis as part of anchoring processes. Resilience often depends on how these emotions are acknowledged, regulated, and redirected (Buzzanell, 2010). Rather than being suppressed, negative feelings are recognized as natural and valid (B. F. Liu et al., 2016; Tierney, 2014).

Some scholars explicitly legitimize the importance of negative feelings. Bessant's (2017) analysis of satirical depictions of young people during the European financial crisis shows how humor operated as a channel through which anger and fear were not only recognized, but also reframed into what she calls ethical energy, a collective resource for critique and resistance. Dencik and Allan (2017) describe how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) deliberately crafted tolerably shocking imagery, powerful enough to stir empathy but restrained enough to avoid overwhelming audiences. Quinlan and Johnson (2020) stress the importance of openly narrating feelings of anxiety, failure, and anger in relation to systemic shortcomings. They show how openness and mutual support can redirect emotions into solidarity and collective strength.

Others situate negative feelings within broader cultural frameworks of belonging. For example, Morse (2023) examines mediatized mourning rituals where slogans such as "We are one" and practices of benevolent grief create recognition for marginalized groups. In this way, mourning becomes more than a private act of loss, instead it functions as a public and performative practice that carves out belonging for the marginalized group. Similarly, Paul (2019) identifies the strategic ritual of emotionality in the Nepali press during the Gulf crisis. As Paul explains, the use of emotion in newswriting constitutes a ritual, because it is through this shared practice that journalists create and disseminate meanings of commonality. These meanings helped cement a sense of belonging within the Nepali community.

Overall, by legitimizing negative emotions and embedding them within narratives of care, solidarity, and action, individuals and communities negotiate the difficult balance between holding on to normalcy and moving toward change.

5. Suggestions for Future Research on Community, Resilience, and Crisis

This review highlights how resilience in marginalized populations has been theorized and documented, while also revealing significant gaps in previous literature that call for further scholarly attention. Building on these insights, several directions emerge for future research. We wish to emphasize that these suggestions are related to the articles analyzed in the present review.

First, resilience needs to be reconceptualized beyond the familiar frame of adaptation. Much of the current literature positions resilience in relation to coping, recovery, or the restoration of normalcy (Madianou, 2015; Oktavianus & Lin, 2023), and identity-based narratives often emphasize continuity and survival (Jones, 2020; A. V. Richardson, 2022). While these perspectives provide important insights, they risk reducing resilience to the capacity to endure within unequal structures. Importantly, however, scholars have already advanced conceptualizations of resilience that foreground resistance and transformation, most notably Buzzanell's (2010) foundational work on communicative resilience, as well as research by Robinson and Schmitz (2021) demonstrating how resistance functions as resilience among LGBTQ youth. Building on this

growing body of scholarship, future research should continue to extend these perspectives by examining how marginalized groups use communicative practices not only to cope with adversity, but also to contest deficit framings, challenge structural inequalities, and articulate visions of more just futures.

Second, based on the studies included in this review, greater attention to trust and institutional relationships is needed. The articles analyzed rarely examined how marginalized groups navigate exclusion or mistrust, whether through discriminatory policies, symbolic neglect, or systemic failures. However, existing scholarship in other disciplines has already explored the communicative construction of trust and mistrust in marginalized contexts and has broadened the analytical focus beyond individual adaptive capacities to include the institutional and infrastructural conditions that shape information resilience (e.g., Davvetas et al., 2022; Lloyd, 2014; Shelton et al., 2021). Future crisis communication research should build on this work by investigating how marginalized communities interpret, resist, and reframe official messages during crises, and how these communicative processes shape resilience.

Third, intersectional approaches offer a crucial avenue to advance understandings of resilience in marginalized populations. Building on Crenshaw's foundational work (1989, 1991), intersectionality shows how overlapping axes of identity, such as race, gender, disability, class, and migration status, shape access to resources and forms of oppression. Although the reviewed studies have offered important insights by focusing on single categories (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, or migration status), such approaches generally treat identities in isolation. Recent work has demonstrated that multiply marginalized groups face compounded communication barriers that emerge precisely at the intersection of identities and overlapping structural inequalities (e.g., Baniya, 2025; Haw, 2024). Future resilience research should therefore examine how intersecting identities, such as migrant women, LGBTQ refugees, undocumented workers with disabilities, or racialized older adults, shape resilience practices. This would enable a more nuanced account of how inequalities are simultaneously reproduced and contested across multiple dimensions.

Fourth, future research should continue to center community voices and participatory models. Although several reviewed studies highlight the value of locally rooted communication infrastructures (Wenzel & Crittenden, 2023), they seldom engage with the substantial body of scholarship that has long advanced participatory, culturally safe, and community-led approaches to communication with marginalized groups (e.g., Lenette, 2019, 2020; Lenette et al., 2020). Building on this existing work, future research would benefit from examining how co-created and trauma-informed communication practices empower marginalized communities, enhance legitimacy, and foster trust. Such approaches underscore the importance of agency and recognize marginalized groups not as passive recipients of crisis communication, but as active shapers of crisis narratives.

Finally, research on digital resilience deserves further expansion. Digital practices already feature prominently in the literature, from polymedia use after Typhoon Haiyan (Madianou, 2015) to queer counter-publics during Covid-19 (Duguay et al., 2023) and alternative mappings of marginalized spaces (Shitrit & Noy, 2024). In addition, extensive work on disability, digital inclusion, and sociotechnical inequalities has theorized digital resilience as relational and structurally embedded (e.g., Goggin et al., 2017; Goggin & Soldatić, 2022). Building on existing work, future work should theorize digital resilience as a relational process and further ask how platform infrastructures, algorithmic systems, and counter-narratives interact to shape marginalized communities' capacity to respond to crises.

6. Conclusion

The present study has synthesized how communication scholarship has conceptualized and examined resilience among marginalized populations in crisis contexts over the past 15 years. By mapping publication outlets, crisis types, groups studied, and recurring challenges, the analysis demonstrates that scholarship in this area is broad, interdisciplinary, and attentive to questions of inequality, representation, and access. At the same time, the review reveals that resilience has often been theorized in narrow terms that frame it as adaptation or coping, rather than as a more expansive process of resistance and transformation (Lloyd, 2014).

By looking through the lens of CTR, the study highlights the communicative practices through which marginalized groups enact resilience: reestablishing normalcy, affirming identities, mobilizing networks, putting alternative logics to work, and legitimizing emotions in ways that enable action. Importantly, the findings show that resilience is not a static trait, but a relational and discursive process embedded within structural inequalities. Crises do not simply expose vulnerability; they also make visible the communicative creativity, solidarity, and agency of marginalized groups in forging new forms of belonging and survival.

The contribution of the present study lies in three areas. First, it consolidates a scattered body of research into a coherent synthesis and further provides a clearer picture of how communication scholarship has engaged with marginalized populations in crisis. Second, it advances theoretical development by integrating CTR with diverse critical perspectives, thereby offering a more relational understanding of resilience. Third, it identifies key gaps and future directions, including the need for intersectional, participatory, and digital approaches that foreground community voices and challenge deficit-based framings.

7. Limitations

First, the present review is limited by its exclusive focus on communication journals indexed in Web of Science, which excludes interdisciplinary research in which communication is central. Fields such as Indigenous studies, disability studies, development communication, and environmental justice provide critical insights into resilience and marginalization, but work in these areas is often published outside traditional communication outlets. As a result, non-Western, decolonial, and community-led perspectives may be underrepresented.

Second, while CTR offered a useful heuristic for analyzing communicative processes of resilience, its application may have overemphasized discursive dimensions, such as narrative, identity, and network activation, while overlooking material, economic, and policy-related aspects less easily captured within communication-centered frameworks. Future work could integrate CTR with structural, political-economic, or policy approaches to more fully account for the complexity of resilience in marginalized contexts.

seminars and webinars organized as part of this initiative, whose discussions and exchanges helped inspire and refine the ideas developed in the article.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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