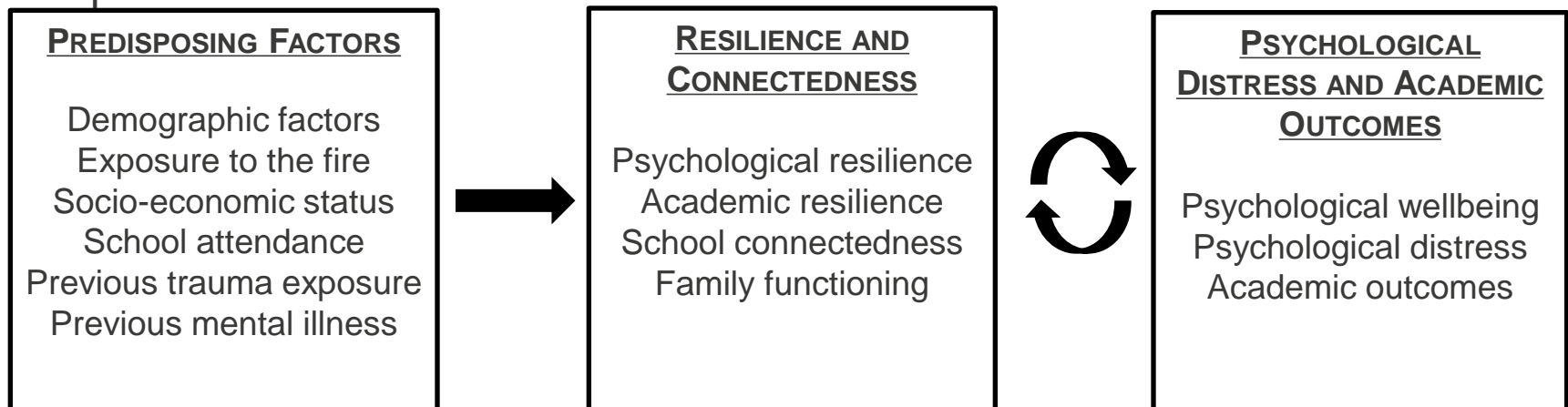


8. Schools Study – Darryl Maybery

The aim of the Schools Study is to determine whether exposure to smoke from the Hazelwood coal mine fire is associated with psychological trauma and distress in school-aged children as well as assess factors associated with recovery and resilience.

Proposed Model:



8.1 Study design

- Surveys and interviews
- All schools in Morwell and targeted schools elsewhere in the Valley will be invited to participate in the study.
- Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students, in line with the annual NAPLAN testing.
- Parents will be approached for consent for their children to participate and be asked some basic demographic, exposure, and family history questions.
- Children will then be invited to complete a survey in school and their teachers asked to complete a very brief survey per child.
- A subset of Morwell children will also be invited to take part in an interview.
- Repeat surveys and interviews will be conducted every two years.

8.2 Time frame

Term 3 (13 July to 18 September)

- Pilot all procedures in test schools then staggered roll out in remainder of schools in the Valley
- Completion of surveys in majority of schools

Term 4 (5 October to 18 December)

- Finalisation of surveys including adding further schools if numbers are required
- Completion of interviews with a subset of students in Morwell

Then repeat of the above every 2 years to track changes over time. With new grade 3 children added in 2017 and 2019

8.3 Potential outcomes

- Determine the level of distress experienced by school-aged children as a result of the Hazelwood smoke event.
- Better understand the challenges faced by schools during and following the event, with a view to informing future disaster response planning for the region and beyond.
- Better understand the interplay between child, family, school and social factors in relation to wellbeing and educational outcomes.

8.4 What we would like from the community

- Parents of children in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 in the selected schools will be invited by their school to participate in the study.
- We would like all families who are approached to agree for themselves, their children and their teachers to take part so that we can understand the impacts.
- We ask the rest of the community to spread the word about the Schools Study and the need for parents and children to be involved.