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Seismic Vulnerability: Assessment, Resilience, Reduction

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Introduction

Earthquakes represent a pervasive threat globally, necessitating extensive research into seismic vulnerability across various domains. Understanding and mitigating these risks are paramount for societal safety and resilience.This research evaluates the seismic vulnerability of existing reinforced concrete buildings, a critical aspect in earthquake-prone regions. It delves into various retrofitting strategies, analyzing their effectiveness in enhancing structural resilience. The study emphasizes the importance of targeted interventions to mitigate collapse risk and improve building performance during seismic events, offering practical insights for urban planning and engineering practices focused on existing infrastructure [1].

This systematic review provides a comprehensive overview of social vulnerability to earthquakes, identifying key determinants and assessment methods. It highlights that vulnerability extends beyond physical infrastructure, encompassing socioeconomic factors, access to resources, and community resilience. The findings underscore the need for holistic approaches to disaster risk reduction that integrate both physical and social dimensions of vulnerability to protect populations more effectively [2].

This study develops fragility curves for highway bridges, specifically considering their response to mainshock-aftershock sequences and the complex interaction with surrounding soil. It demonstrates how such sequential seismic events significantly increase vulnerability compared to single mainshock scenarios. The research provides valuable tools for more accurate seismic risk assessment and design of resilient bridge structures, integrating realistic loading conditions [3].

This case study focuses on the seismic vulnerability of school buildings in Pokhara Metropolitan City, Nepal, a region highly susceptible to earthquakes. It highlights the prevalent use of non-engineered construction and the critical safety implications for children and educators during seismic events. The findings underscore an urgent need for retrofitting existing school infrastructure and implementing stricter building codes for new constructions to reduce educational disruption and save lives [4].

This research assesses the seismic vulnerability of unreinforced masonry buildings within historic urban contexts, using an Italian case study. It points out that while these structures possess cultural value, their inherent design makes them highly susceptible to earthquake damage. The study proposes methodologies for evaluation and intervention that respect historical integrity while significantly enhancing seismic safety, crucial for preserving heritage in active seismic zones [5].

This review offers a comprehensive look at the seismic vulnerability of critical infrastructure, covering essential systems like transportation, energy, and communication networks. It highlights the cascading failures that can occur when these interconnected systems are compromised during an earthquake, leading to widespread societal disruption. The paper advocates for integrated risk assessment and resilience-building strategies to ensure continuity of essential services post-disaster [6].

This paper presents a multi-criteria decision-making approach for assessing human vulnerability to earthquakes. It moves beyond purely structural assessments, integrating social, economic, and institutional factors that influence how individuals and communities cope with and recover from seismic events. The methodology helps identify vulnerable populations and geographic areas, allowing for more targeted and effective disaster preparedness and response interventions [7].

This work proposes a conceptual framework for integrating social vulnerability into earthquake early warning systems. It argues that early warnings are most effective when tailored to the varying capacities and needs of different social groups. By incorporating demographic, economic, and accessibility factors, the framework aims to improve communication strategies and evacuation protocols, ensuring that warnings translate into effective protective actions for everyone, especially the most vulnerable [8].

This systematic review examines the seismic vulnerability of non-structural elements within hospital buildings. It highlights that while structural integrity is often prioritized, damage to non-structural components like ceilings, partition walls, and medical equipment can severely impair a hospital's functionality post-earthquake. The paper emphasizes the need for comprehensive seismic design that includes non-structural elements to ensure hospitals remain operational during and after a disaster [9].

This study explores the intersection of climate change and earthquake vulnerability, offering a global perspective on multi-hazard risk. It argues that climate-induced events like heavy rainfall or droughts can exacerbate seismic risks by altering soil properties, triggering landslides, or degrading infrastructure. The research calls for integrated risk assessment frameworks that consider these interconnected hazards, crucial for building comprehensive resilience strategies in a changing world [10].

Description

The assessment of seismic vulnerability is fundamental for enhancing urban resilience. Research specifically evaluates existing reinforced concrete buildings in earthquake-prone regions, analyzing various retrofitting strategies to enhance structural resilience. This work emphasizes targeted interventions to mitigate collapse risk and improve performance during seismic events, providing practical insights for urban planning and engineering practices focused on existing infrastructure [1]. Beyond modern structures, studies also focus on the unique challenges presented by unreinforced masonry buildings in historical urban contexts, such as those found in Italy. These structures, while culturally significant, are inherently susceptible to earthquake damage, necessitating specialized methodologies for evaluation and intervention that respect historical integrity while significantly enhancing seismic safety [5].

Critical infrastructure, including transportation, energy, and communication networks, faces significant seismic vulnerability. A comprehensive review highlights the potential for cascading failures when these interconnected systems are compromised, leading to widespread societal disruption. Integrated risk assessment and resilience-building strategies are crucial to ensure the continuity of essential services post-disaster [6]. Furthermore, the functionality of critical facilities like hospitals depends not only on structural integrity but also on the seismic performance of non-structural elements. Research examines the vulnerability of components such as ceilings, partition walls, and medical equipment in hospital buildings, stressing that damage to these elements can severely impair operations. This underscores the need for comprehensive seismic design that includes non-structural components to maintain hospital functionality during and after disasters [9].

Particular attention is given to public facilities such as school buildings. A case study in Pokhara Metropolitan City, Nepal, reveals the pervasive use of non-engineered construction, which poses critical safety implications for children and educators during seismic events. Findings stress the urgent need for retrofitting existing school infrastructure and implementing stricter building codes for new constructions to minimize educational disruption and save lives [4]. The dynamic response of infrastructure, such as highway bridges, is also critical. Studies develop fragility curves that specifically account for mainshock-aftershock sequences and the complex soil-structure interaction. This research demonstrates how sequential seismic events significantly increase vulnerability compared to single mainshock scenarios, offering valuable tools for more accurate seismic risk assessment and the design of resilient bridge structures under realistic loading conditions [3].

Seismic vulnerability extends significantly beyond physical structures, encompassing profound social and human dimensions. A systematic review provides a comprehensive overview of social vulnerability to earthquakes, identifying key determinants and assessment methods. It clarifies that vulnerability includes socioeconomic factors, access to resources, and community resilience, underscoring the necessity for holistic approaches to disaster risk reduction that integrate both physical and social aspects to protect populations more effectively [2]. To further refine this, a multi-criteria decision-making approach has been developed for assessing human vulnerability, moving past purely structural evaluations. This method integrates social, economic, and institutional factors to understand how individuals and communities cope and recover, thus identifying vulnerable populations and geographic areas for more targeted and effective disaster preparedness and response interventions [7].

Integrating social vulnerability into earthquake early warning systems is a significant area of advancement. A conceptual framework posits that early warnings are most effective when adapted to the varying capacities and needs of different social groups. By incorporating demographic, economic, and accessibility factors, this framework aims to improve communication strategies and evacuation protocols, ensuring that warnings translate into effective protective actions for everyone, especially the most vulnerable [8]. On a broader scale, research explores the intersection of climate change and earthquake vulnerability, offering a global perspective on multi-hazard risk. It argues that climate-induced events, such as heavy rainfall or droughts, can exacerbate seismic risks by altering soil properties, triggering landslides, or degrading infrastructure. This calls for integrated risk assessment frameworks that explicitly consider these interconnected hazards, which are crucial for building comprehensive resilience strategies in an increasingly dynamic world [10].

Conclusion

Research evaluates the seismic vulnerability of existing reinforced concrete buildings in earthquake-prone areas, emphasizing targeted retrofitting for improved structural resilience. It also provides a comprehensive overview of social vulnerability to earthquakes, highlighting socioeconomic factors and community resilience for effective disaster risk reduction. Fragility curves for highway bridges are developed, considering mainshock-aftershock sequences and soil-structure interaction to assess increased vulnerability. Case studies analyze the seismic risks of school buildings in Nepal and unreinforced masonry structures in historic Italian urban contexts, stressing the need for retrofitting and improved codes. A review discusses the seismic vulnerability of critical infrastructure, noting cascading failures and the need for integrated risk assessment to maintain essential services. Multi-criteria approaches assess human vulnerability by integrating social, economic, and institutional factors to identify at-risk populations. A conceptual framework aims to integrate social vulnerability into earthquake early warning systems, tailoring warnings to diverse social groups for effective protective actions. Investigations also cover the seismic vulnerability of non-structural elements in hospital buildings, stressing their importance for maintaining functionality post-disaster. Finally, a global perspective explores the intersection of climate change and earthquake vulnerability, advocating for multi-hazard risk assessment frameworks due to exacerbating factors like altered soil properties and landslides.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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