

A Study on Disaster Awareness and Preparedness Among College Students In District Baramulla of Kashmir valley

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Abstract

Disasters have become a serious challenge for the world community. The tangible and intangible losses due to disasters have increased dramatically while impacting the least developed countries the most. The frequency and magnitude of disasters has worsened the condition. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction [UNISDR] (2012) reported enormous economic and human impact of disasters in the last two decades. The rise in disasters has generated the need to develop strategies to reduce their negative impacts. Many communities around the globe have brought into focus the role of education in preparing for and preventing disasters, as UNISDR (2007) stated that it is crystal-clear that “knowledgeable and involved people are critical to build a safe society”. The need for creating a safer society reveals the importance of imparting necessary knowledge to people in order to develop disaster management skills, and to increase awareness about disaster related issues (Lidstone, 1995). In this paper an attempt has been made to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of college students studying in district Baramulla of Kashmir valley regarding disaster preparedness. The results obtained showed that there is a general lack of information among students regarding disaster awareness and preparedness. This highlights the need for disaster safety education. The level of practice was largely negative with acceptable knowledge and positive attitude regarding disaster preparedness among college students of district Baramulla Kashmir valley. It is concluded that disaster never happened does not mean, it cannot happen. Students can be proving useful work force in disaster situation. College students need to know basic techniques carried out in disasters.

Keywords- Disaster, Knowledge Preparedness, Students, Baramulla district.

INTRODUCTION

As per the WHO, disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society causing widespread human, material, economic, or environmental losses, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources (UNISDR). As per this definition states, disasters are generally found to occur from two sources, being either natural or anthropogenic. Disasters such as earthquakes, lightning strikes, volcanic eruptions, drought, landslides, rocks falling, avalanches, storms, hurricanes, and flooding are considered to be natural disasters, even as many forest fires, any kind of accidents and wars are man-made disasters. Depending on the type of disaster, the extents of the destruction that may occur as a result of disasters seem to be very large for both humans and the environment. Therefore, every society needs to have an action plan for disasters and give importance to these efforts in order to reduce losses and maintain daily life. Because human behaviors surrounding the issue of coping with sudden events are related to each individual's levels of preparedness, knowledge and consciousness, identifying levels of knowledge and awareness about disasters, especially in young people and working class to increase their knowledge and awareness will provide preventive and protective support for societies.

Disaster education, which includes education on disaster risks, mitigation and preparedness strategies, is one way to lessen the negative consequences of disasters (Smith 1993; Mulyasari et.al., 2011). It is vital to increase people's knowledge and attitudes about natural and human induced disasters so that they can cope with their adverse effects. In order to be well aware and prepared for disasters, we need to develop knowledge, skills and values at all levels. According to the 2005-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action, the objective of disaster education is 'to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels, in order to reduce the undesirable social and economic impacts of hazards. Emergency management agencies, schools and non-governmental organizations have increasingly targeted children as an audience for disaster education from the last decades (Lintner 2006; UNISDR 2007; Mitchell et.al. 2008; NCCD 2010; Shiwaku and Fernandez 2011; Sharpe and Kelman 2011; UNESCO 2013).

Kashmir is a Himalayan mountainous region, so it is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. Due to predominant mountainous terrains, some of the large rivers on the earth originating from the Himalaya, and due to strong rains and snowfall, the country is overwhelmed by floods and landslides. Geologically Kashmir is one of the most earthquake prone regions in the world, which have experienced catastrophic earthquakes in the past and

do expect a large earthquake in future. All over the world, Kashmir is well known for disasters like floods, landslides, and avalanches. The disaster statistics of Kashmir certainly draw a worldwide attention, especially from the disaster scientists and practitioners. The most of the natural disasters which affect the people of Kashmir because of the weather, floods and fewer disasters are caused by earthquakes. It will not be exaggerating if one says that even a single day is not passing without the news of disasters, in the form of flood or earth quake or any other disaster. These calamities may be due to natural causes such as heavy rain or earth quake where as some others will be due to the negligence of human being. The present study was one of the attempts made to know the actual level of knowledge and awareness about the disaster preparedness among the college students in district Baramulla of Kashmir valley.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a well- designed questionnaire was prepared and distributed among 550 students selected randomly from different colleges of District Baramulla of Kashmir valley. The Purpose and method of the study undertaken was explained to the students understudy to get their consent. The tool of research for present paper was a certified self- administered questionnaire based on literature available on the topic. The questionnaire was designed to assess student's knowledge and awareness among students about Disaster Preparedness. The Universe of the study is Government Degree College Sopore.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Disaster Awareness among students in Baramulla Region of J&K

S.No	Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)
01.	Do you have any idea what a disaster is?	100	0
02.	Do you have idea what a disaster plan is?	62	38
03.	Do you know what disaster preparedness is?	70.25	29.75
04.	Do you have any knowledge about mock drill?	41.43	58.57
05.	Do you think disaster training is important?	64.42	35.58
06.	Do you know about District Disaster Management Authority?	83.56	16.44

Table 1 shows the Disaster awareness among the students of Baramulla district on the basis of analysis of the collected data. The Table 1 depicts that all the students who were included in the sample have the concept about disasters, 62% students know about disaster plan, 70.25% students know what disaster preparedness means, 41.5% have knowledge about mock drills, 64.5% think about disaster training is important and 61.45% know about District Disaster Management Authority. The results of our study reveal that the students under study results are not well aware about disasters.

Table 2: Attitude regarding Disaster preparedness among students in Baramulla Region
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S.No	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
01	I need to know about disaster management plans?	92.5	3	4.5
02	Do you think it is necessary to have a disaster plan?	93.5	3.5	3
03	Disaster plans need to be regularly updated?	86.5	1.25	12
04	Training is necessary for some students who are unaware about the disaster preparedness?	90.5	2.5	7
05	Administration should be adequately prepared when a disaster occurs?	94.5	2	3.5
06	Disaster preparedness is important for educated people only?	5.75	72.5	21.75
07	Disasters are unlikely to happen in our district?	2.25	84.75	13

As per the results depicted in Table 2, it reveals that 92.5% students want to know about disaster plan, 93.5% students want to have disaster plan necessarily, 94.5% students want that management should be adequately prepared when a disaster occurs, 90.5% students want training should be necessary for all some students who are unaware about the disaster preparedness, Disaster education should be given at the grass root level so that students who are not sure and those who disagree to know about disaster plans are involved in training

programs regarding disaster preparedness. The least casualties should also be considered as disaster so that events occurring on a large scale could be tackled more seriously to put a control on the number of events throughout the year. Colleges, universities should incorporate some plans for students to make evacuation, mitigation strategies in their particular areas this will help students to grab more and more sufficient knowledge about the vulnerabilities of their areas. It was noticed from our study that majority of students desire to be ready for disasters and for the same like suitable planning and supervision for disasters, training of general people and preparation of appropriate disaster plans.

Table 3: Practice regarding disaster preparedness among students in Baramulla Region

S. No	Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't know (%)
1.	Are mock drills of any disaster done at your college?	3.25	90.75	6
2.	If yes, Drill done is useful?	2.75	1.5	95.75
3.	Is there any training going on in your college at any time in a year?	55.75	31.75	12.5
4.	Is the disaster plan periodically updated by authority?	9.75	86	4.25
5.	Have you ever come across any disaster in your life?	72.85	20.15	7
6.	Have you ever been a volunteer for disaster preparedness team?	2.5	77.5	20
7.	Do you know what sort of latest disaster your state faced?	96.5	1.5	2
8.	Have you ever seen any placard in your college display information regarding emergency situation?	0	94.5	5.5
9.	Have you gone through Jammu and Kashmir state disaster management plan?	3.5	87.5	9
10.	Is it important to include disaster management as a subject in curriculum?	94.5	1.5	4

Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents reported that no disaster drills and trainings are carried out in the colleges while as the 94.5% students agreed to include disaster management as one of the core subjects in the curriculum so that students will get vast knowledge of disasters and the surrounding vulnerabilities and should involve themselves in the capacity building programs for the well being and disaster free societies. Majority (96.5%) of the respondents were aware about the latest disaster happened in their state, Students should be given knowledge about what Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed disasters ranging from Earthquake to floods, Snow blizzards to Avalanches, wind storms to landslides peculiar topography, terrains, extreme weather conditions ,climate etc more and more research work should be done by the students to localize the root causes of series of events and to put effective mitigate measures thwart destruction forces.

Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents According to GENDER

GENDER	FREQUENCY (F)	PERCENTAGE (%)
FEMALE	361	65.6%
MALE	189	34.3%
TOTAL	550	100%

Table 4 shows the distribution of the respondents according to their gender: male and female. A larger percentage of the respondents were female with the total frequency of 361 and a percent of 65.6% conversely, only 189 respondents were male or 34.4% of the population under investigation.

CONCLUSION

The results of our present study revealed that there is a general lack of information among students concerning disaster awareness and preparedness in District Baramulla. This paper highlights the need for disaster safety education among college students. It is not possible to prevent disasters, but it is possible to be prepared for them. It is evident from the facts that mitigation and investment in disaster preparedness can save thousands of lives, vital economic assets, livelihoods and reduce the overall cost of disaster relief. It is at this juncture that the role of education schools in reducing the risk of disasters becomes crucial. Mainstreaming DRR into school curriculum aims to raise awareness and provide a better

understanding of disaster management for children, teachers and communities. Students can be made aware regarding the impacts of disasters through both formal and causal education. It is essential we change our life style and if we do not transform our ways at a mental and spiritual level, it is inevitable that we will proceed to experience the effects of global warming and unprecedented natural disasters. Only spiritual practice can transform the polluted human mind into a pure one. Hence, it is necessary that we understand the fundamental root causes of natural disasters and climate change and take suitable steps to eradicate the pollution in the world that can truly help the humanity. We found through spiritual research that the cause behind most biological disasters such as the deadly viruses on Earth, like: AIDS, Ebola and Bird-flu is due to the fact of deviation from spiritual path. The viruses that have been created on earth however will continue to be on Earth and cures need to be observed for them. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: “Take precautions as everybody is guided to that which has been destined for him.” As for you should drink to quench your thirst. If something bad comes, it is because of our bad doings and if something good reaches us then it is from Almighty Allah's grace. Almighty Allah Says (what means): “What comes to you of good is from Allah, but what comes to you of evil, [O man], is from yourself.” [Quran 4:79].

On the basis of our study, the following suggestions were given:

- The subject of disaster management should be included in the curriculum.
- Training manuals and booklets on Disaster Awareness should be developed.
- College authorities should collaborate with concerned agencies to raise awareness among the college Teachers too so that guide the students accordingly.
- Disaster Awareness and preparedness messages can be circulated among students using posters, placard and magazines.
- Documentaries and videos can be used to transmit knowledge and create awareness.
- Mock drills and evacuation drills should be exercised periodically in all the colleges in collaboration with the concerned authorities and students should be actively involved in those drills.
- Create a group of on-call and trained DRRM volunteers to prepare for rescue and other related matters.
- Educate the local community folks in the far-flung areas about disaster risk reduction management.

- Transparency and proper governance of funds before, during, and after the disaster or calamity.

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