DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS

Abstract

Disaster is a term that can be defined in various ways, depending on the context. Generally, it refers to a sudden or catastrophic event that causes significant damage, destruction, and loss of life. However, the definition of disaster goes beyond just a calamitous event – it also involves the subsequent effects on a community, a society, or environment.

Disasters can be categorized into two main groups: natural disasters and human-made disasters.

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1. **Natural Disasters:** These are disasters that occur due to natural phenomena and are usually beyond human control. They include:

   - **Geological Disasters:** These are disasters caused by geological changes or movements in the earth. They include earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides and tsunamis among others.
   - **Meteorological Disasters:** These are disasters caused by weather and climate conditions. They include cyclones, hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, droughts and heatwaves among others.
   - **Biological Disasters:** These are disasters arising from the biological sphere. They include pandemics, epidemics, plagues, and infestations, etc.

2. **Man-made Disasters:** These are disasters that are caused directly or indirectly by human actions. They can further be divided into:

   - **Technological Disasters:** These disasters are a result of the failure of technology. They include industrial accidents, nuclear explosions, chemical

spills, oil spills and structure collapses among others.

- **Sociopolitical Disasters:** These disasters occur due to sociopolitical conditions or conflicts. They include wars, genocides, riots, terrorism and economic crises.

- **Environmental Disasters:** These disasters result from adverse environmental conditions brought about by human activities. They include deforestation, desertification, water pollution, air pollution, and loss of biodiversity.

Each type of disaster has unique impacts and requires distinct strategies for preparedness, response, and recovery. Understanding these different types of disasters can help in creating effective disaster management and mitigation plans. Disaster preparedness and awareness are of utmost importance in today's scenario. So, in this chapter we are going to discuss about Significance of Disaster Preparedness and Awareness in details.

Keywords: Disaster, Preparedness, NGO, Students, Risk Reduction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Disaster Preparedness and Awareness: Disaster preparedness and awareness play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals as well as of communities. This holds true for university students who are often living away from home and facing new challenges. It is essential for these young adults to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to respond effectively in times of emergencies.

Firstly, university campuses should prioritize disaster preparedness by conducting regular drills and providing training sessions. This could include mock fire drills, earthquake simulations, and workshops on first aid and emergency response. By actively engaging students in these activities, they can become familiar with evacuation procedures, learn how to administer basic medical aid, and develop a sense of responsibility towards their own safety and that of their peers.

Additionally, university authorities should disseminate information about potential hazards and disaster management strategies. This could be done through various channels such as posters, emails, and social media platforms. Students should be educated about the different types of disasters that could occur in their area, such as floods, hurricanes, or even pandemics, and be provided with clear instructions on what to do in each scenario. This awareness will empower them to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions during emergencies.

Moreover, universities can collaborate with local emergency management agencies and organizations to conduct workshops and seminars on disaster preparedness. These sessions can cover a wide range of topics, including how to create a personal emergency kit, develop a communication plan with family and friends during disasters, and understand the importance of community resilience. By involving experts in these fields, students can gain valuable insights and practical skills that will prove beneficial not only during their time at university but also throughout their lives.

Shaw et al. (2004; Pg. 40) enacted that the need to include disaster education especially for teacher education and their roles as disaster managers in schools were realized in Akita, Japan after the incidence of tsunami (1983) which killed children of 13 elementary schools.

According to Ozmen (2006), to prevent the large amount of destructions and to become a disaster resistant and resilient society, schools and colleges can play a crucial role.

The UNISDR (2007) with the theme of "Let our children teach us", reveals that 'children taught about various concepts, preventive measures, practices about disasters, can pass on to their known person especially parents what they have learnt in their classrooms or activity sessions about hazards and risk reduction. (UNISDR. 2007. Acting with Common Purpose Proceedings of the First session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Geneva)

Ronan and Johnston (2001) clearly stated in their findings after conducting their research about education related to hazard for youth, that 'hazard education programmes can help children achieve increased level of awareness, more realistic risk reduction related

perceptions and enhances the knowledge of risk mitigation with increased levels of home-based hazard adjustment'.

Furthermore, incorporating disaster preparedness into the curriculum can also be highly impactful. Universities can offer elective courses or modules that focus on disaster management, emergency response, and sustainable development. This will enable students to delve deeper into the subject matter, understand the underlying causes of disasters, and explore ways to mitigate their impact on society. Such academic exposure will cultivate a culture of preparedness among university students, making them proactive agents of change in the face of adversity.

II. IMPORTANCE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND AWARENESS

Disaster preparedness and awareness play a crucial role in reducing the impact of natural and man-made disasters. In today's world, where the frequency and intensity of disasters are on the rise, it is imperative to prioritize disaster preparedness to safeguard lives, property, and the environment.

One of the key reasons why disaster preparedness is important is that it can save lives. By being aware of potential hazards and having a plan in place, individuals and communities can respond effectively during emergencies. Preparedness measures such as pre-active alertness like early warning systems, various evacuation plans, and supplies related to emergency can help minimize casualties and injuries.

Moreover, disaster preparedness also helps in reducing the economic impact of disasters. When communities are well-prepared, they can respond swiftly and efficiently, thereby minimizing damage to infrastructure, businesses, and livelihoods. By investing in preparedness measures, governments can save a significant amount of money that would otherwise be spent on post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

Another crucial aspect of disaster preparedness is raising awareness. It is essential to educate individuals about the potential risks they face and the steps they can take to protect themselves and their communities. This includes disseminating information about evacuation routes, emergency shelters, and necessary supplies. By promoting awareness campaigns, governments and organizations can empower people to make informed decisions during times of crisis.

Furthermore, disaster preparedness also strengthens community resilience. When individuals come together and work collectively to prepare for disasters, they create a network of support that can withstand and recover from adversity. Community-based organizations, local authorities, and volunteers play a vital role in fostering this resilience by organizing drills, training sessions, and community meetings.

In conclusion, disaster preparedness and awareness are of utmost importance in today's world. By investing in preparedness measures, educating communities, and promoting awareness, we can reduce the impact of disasters and protect lives, livelihoods, and the environment. It is a collective responsibility to prioritize disaster preparedness and build resilient communities that can effectively respond to and recover from any form of disaster.

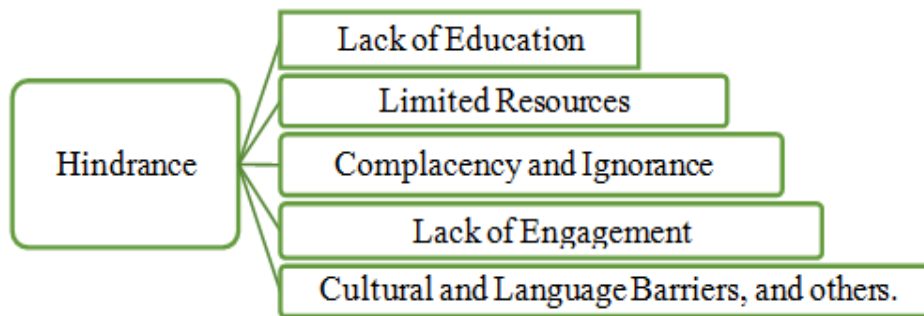## III. HINDRANCE AGAINST DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS

Disaster preparedness and awareness are crucial for the safety and well-being of individuals and communities. However, there are several hindrances that prevent students from fully embracing and engaging in these important aspects. Let's explore some of these hindrances and their impact.

1. **Lack of Education:** One major hindrance is the lack of proper education on disaster preparedness and awareness. Many educational institutions do not include this topic in their curriculum, leaving students unaware of the potential risks and ways to mitigate them. Without adequate education, students may not understand the importance of being prepared or how to respond effectively during a disaster.

2. **Limited Resources:** Another hindrance is the limited availability of resources dedicated to disaster preparedness. Schools often struggle to allocate sufficient funds for emergency supplies, training programs, or even information campaigns. Without access to necessary resources, students may remain uninformed and unprepared for potential disasters.

3. **Complacency and Ignorance:** A significant hindrance is the complacency and ignorance among students regarding disasters. Some students may underestimate the severity of potential threats or believe that disasters are unlikely to occur in their area. This attitude can lead to a lack of motivation to prepare or seek information about disaster preparedness.

4. **Lack of Engagement:** Disasters can seem like distant events for students who have not experienced them firsthand. As a result, they may fail to engage actively in disaster preparedness initiatives. This lack of engagement can hinder the development of necessary skills, such as first aid or evacuation procedures, which are crucial during emergencies.

5. **Barriers Related to Culture and Language:** In diverse communities, cultural as well as language barriers can hinder effective disaster preparedness and awareness efforts. Students from non-English speaking backgrounds may struggle to understand information or instructions provided in a language they are not fluent in. This barrier can prevent them from fully participating in preparedness activities and understanding the importance of being prepared.

To overcome these hindrances, it is essential to address each one systematically. Educational institutions should incorporate disaster preparedness and awareness into their curriculum, ensuring that students receive comprehensive education on the subject. Additionally, governments and organizations should allocate sufficient resources to support schools in their preparedness efforts, including the provision of emergency supplies and training programs.

Moreover, initiatives should be taken to raise awareness among school and college going students about the importance of disaster preparedness. This can be achieved through collaborative efforts, engaging and interactive campaigns that appeal to their interests and utilize technology. By actively involving students in preparedness

activities and providing them with the necessary tools and knowledge, we can overcome these hindrances and foster a culture of preparedness among the younger generation.

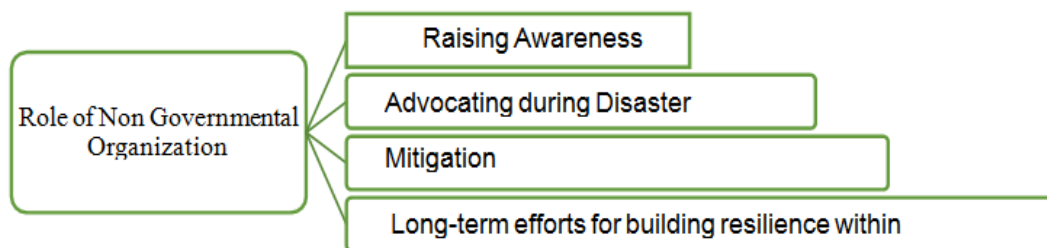

Picture: Hindrance of Disaster Preparedness

IV. ROLE OF NGOs

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in disaster preparedness, mitigation, recovery, and management. These organizations, independent of government control, work tirelessly to provide support and assistance to communities affected by natural or man-made disasters. Their efforts are instrumental in reducing the impact of disasters and helping affected populations rebuild their lives.

1. **Raise Awareness:** One of the primary roles of NGOs in disaster preparedness is to raise awareness and educate communities about potential risks and hazards. Through workshops, training programs, and awareness campaigns, NGOs empower individuals and communities to take proactive measures to prepare for disasters. This includes developing emergency response plans, conducting drills, and disseminating information on evacuation routes and safety precautions.

2. **Advocating:** NGOs also play a significant role in disaster mitigation by advocating for policies and practices that aim to reduce the risks associated with disasters. They work closely with government agencies, local communities, and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies that focus on hazard reduction, such as building resilient infrastructure, implementing early warning systems, and promoting sustainable land-use practices. By addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities, NGOs contribute to minimizing the impact of disasters on communities.

3. **Provide vital Support During the Recovery Phase:** In the aftermath of a disaster, NGOs provide vital support to affected populations during the recovery phase. They offer immediate relief by providing emergency shelter, food, water, and medical assistance. NGOs also assist in restoring essential services, such as healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities, to help communities regain their normalcy. Additionally, these organizations facilitate the coordination of resources and efforts between government agencies, humanitarian actors, and local communities to ensure an efficient and effective recovery process.

4. **Long-Term Efforts for Building Resilience within Communities:** NGOs also play a critical role in the long- term management of disasters. They work towards building

resilience within communities by promoting sustainable development practices, enhancing local capacities, and advocating for inclusive policies. NGOs engage in community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives to ensure that vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and the elderly, are included in decision-making processes and have access to resources and support.

Hence, NGOs have a vital role in disaster preparedness, mitigation, recovery, and management. Their efforts in raising awareness, advocating for policies, providing immediate relief, and facilitating long-term recovery contribute significantly to reducing the impact of disasters and building resilient communities. By working in collaboration with governments, communities, and other stakeholders, NGOs play a crucial part in ensuring the well-being and safety of populations affected by disasters.

Picture: Role of NGOs

V. CONCLUSION

Disaster preparedness and awareness among university students are of utmost importance. By prioritizing drills and training, disseminating information, organizing workshops, and incorporating the topic into the curriculum, universities can empower their students to face emergencies confidently. These efforts will not only enhance their individual safety but also contribute towards building resilient communities capable of effectively responding to disasters.

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