DISASTER AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF GLORIA: BASIS FOR ACTION PLAN

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-comparative study aimed to determine the level of disaster awareness and the extent of disaster preparedness of public secondary school teachers in the municipality of Gloria. Two-part self-made survey questionnaire used. Results showed that the respondents were fully aware of the things that must be observed and done when earthquake, flood, and typhoon occur while in terms of disaster preparedness, findings bared that they were on the moderate extent in terms of the facilities and equipment and relief goods/medical supplies. On the other hand, 87.50% of them agreed that they actively engaged themselves in various activities leading to survival and response operation. Moreover, ANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference between disaster awareness and preparedness of the respondents. Meanwhile, there was no significant difference obtained in the level of their disaster awareness but in terms of the extent of their disaster preparedness, a significant difference was shown. Thus, disaster awareness and preparedness should be given equal importance in making a plan for them to respond well and to ensure their safety. School administrators should continue also to make strong linkages with other sectors of the community to encourage support to their school disaster risk reduction programs and activities.

Keywords: Disaster Awareness, Disaster Preparedness, and Secondary School Teachers

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, natural disasters are considered major challenges constituting extreme events that seriously disrupt functioning of the community causing human, property or environmental losses. Its perilous outcomes are hardly predicted and incalculable. They may be foresighted, through many inventions and technologies such as satellites and computer software, but their intensity, magnitude, and severity are too elusive to determine. Weather forecasts can tell typhoon’s signals and ranges, and seismologist can measure tremors of earthquakes, nonetheless, despite these truths, as natural disaster hits an area, humans, properties and all life forms on earth are threatened.

It was found out that half of weather disasters were linked to climate change. According to Randy Lee Loftis, in his article published in November 2015 in National Geographic, human-caused changes in climate played a role in 14 of 28 storms, droughts, and other 2014 extreme weather events investigated by global scientists. Climate change played a role in extreme heat in Korea and China and made several disasters more likely, including flooding in Jakarta, a Nepal snowstorm that killed 43, and extremely high sea-surface temperatures in the western tropical and northeast Pacific Ocean.

Natural catastrophes’ alarming occurrences really need to have a global information campaign and local actions to determine its impact on people’s life, properties, emotional and psychological stability. Saving lives and properties is a challenge accepted by all stakeholders in private and governmental entities. As
such, aside from the business of providing basic education, the Department of Education is responsible for providing safe teaching-learning facilities and hazard-free environment to the schoolchildren, according to Jesli A. Lapus, Former Secretary of the Department of Education in his message in the Department of Education’s Disaster Risk Reduction Resource Book (2008).

Indeed, natural hazards comes in many forms and are not occasional phenomena with unfortunate consequences. Floods, wind and ice storms, earthquakes, drought, volcanic eruption, and tsunami lead to about 400 national disasters, an average of 74,000 deaths and more than 230 million people affected every single year (Petal, 2008).

Our country, Philippines was never spared from the onslaught of earthquakes and typhoons. According to Vanessa J. Tobin, Representative of United Nations Children’s Fund, in her written message in the Department of Education’s Disaster Risk Reduction Resource Book, Philippines is considered one of the most disaster-prone countries. Every year, storms, flash floods, landslides, earthquakes, and volcanic activities batter the country. In 2013, Visayas regions were devastated by seismic activities. Recently, in December 2015, on the report of Manila Bulletin, typhoon Nona killed about 42 people and devastated 98,000 homes in the provinces of Northern Samar, Oriental Mindoro and Sorsogon. In the Province of Oriental Mindoro alone, the Municipality of Gloria was one of the municipalities which were heavily affected including enormous damaged in infrastructure, agriculture, power sector and even school properties, especially classrooms.

Thus, DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2015 entitled Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Coordination and Information Management Protocol was released on June 21, 2015, pursuant to Republic Act No. 10121 entitled The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, mandating all national government agencies to institutionalize policies, structures, coordination mechanisms and programs with continuing budget appropriation on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) from national to local levels and DepEd Order No. 50, s. 2011 entitled Creation of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (DRRMO), mandating the said office to initiate and spearhead the establishment of mechanisms which prepare, guarantee protection and increase resiliency of the Department of Education (DepEd) constituents in the face of disaster. The DepEd issued Coordination and Information Management Protocols for the schools, schools division offices (SDOs) and regional offices (ROs) and coordinators to establish the system of coordination and information management, and provide guidance to DepEd field offices, schools and DRRM coordinators on their respective roles and functions relative to DRRM implementation. In relation to the unfortunate events that happened, there is a possibility that disasters may happen when students are still in the school. It may strike while the teachers are discussing, giving activities, recitations and the like. It is frightening; therefore, administrators of the school must have a concrete plan to counter measure this shocking event. Recently, the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council of Gloria had recorded that schools at its vicinity were damaged by typhoon Nona which brought uprooted trees, destroyed classrooms, broke window panes and devastated school facilities.

The latter statements which mentioned the harshness of disasters, the role of every school’s stakeholder in the success recovery when disasters occurs and as well as laws and acts promulgated to mitigate accurate plans for disaster management prompted the researcher to conduct this study considering the assessment on respondents’ disaster awareness in terms of earthquake, flood, and typhoon. The assessment was linked to the preparedness of respondents with respect to the facilities and equipment, relief goods /medical supplies, and survival and response operation skills. The study also provided answer to what action plan can be proposed by the researcher based on the result.
2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive-comparative methods of research was utilized in this study. A self-made questionnaire which was prudently validated by the expert and employed for reliability testing, was used as primary data gathering tool to 111 respondents who were randomly chosen using Stratified Random Sampling from a total population of 156 public secondary school teachers in the municipality of Gloria.

Data were treated statistically using Descriptive Statistics such as Mean and Inferential Statistics such as ANOVA, T-Test, and Post-hoc Analysis. Weighted Mean was used to measure the indicators of the extent of the disaster awareness and preparedness of public secondary school teachers. On the other hand, ANOVA, T-test and Post-Hoc Analysis were used in determining the significant difference between and among the data gathered from the respondents.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondents showed high level of awareness indicating deep knowledge and understanding on what to do and the negative impacts of an earthquake to their live and properties as represented by the overall mean of 4.80. This is in congruence with the notion of Victoria (2015) which pointed out that community participation has been recognized as the additional element in disaster management necessary to reverse the worldwide trend of increasing frequency and loss from disasters, build a culture of safety and disaster resilient communities, and ensure sustainable development for all.

In addition, the respondents were fully aware that important papers/documents must be kept in tightly closed plastic containers, people residing near the riverbanks must always be subjected to pre-emptive evacuation and must not return to their houses if the flood is not yet subsided which ranked first among the items. The overall mean of 4.70 generally described the respondents as fully aware on the things that need to do in terms of flood. This supports the claim of Perry (2013) that the government and non-government workers have human resources that need to be secured for further delivery of basic services.

Likewise, the importance of listening to the updated weather forecast about the prevailing typhoon in the area and keeping of flashlights, candles and battery operated radio secured within easy reach were shown on the results of the respondents’ perception being the highest ranking item in terms of the respondents’ disaster awareness in terms of typhoon. Generally, as described by the overall mean of 4.80, the secondary school teachers in the Municipality of Gloria are knowledgeable and well oriented on the needed to do before, during and after the occurrence of a typhoon. This has a connection with the findings of Murphy (2014) which concluded that the learning process for disaster preparedness takes place within the shared context of various stakeholders, from dialogue between the stakeholders, and from within the web of relationships of each stakeholder.

Meanwhile, the extent of disaster preparedness of secondary teachers in the Municipality of Gloria is high in terms of having toilets to be used by stranded students/teachers/evacuees in times of necessity evident by being the highest ranking item. Ranked lowest showed that the respondents perceived that their schools were less prepared when it comes to having a rescue boat or floating vehicle for life saving operations for rescuing stranded students due to flood. The overall mean of 3.10 indicates moderate extent as perceived by the respondents in this indicator. As cited by Pagaduan (2010), communities cannot do, on their own. We know that when it comes to financial resources, schools have limited one. Procuring equipment like rescue boat or floating vehicle may hard for the school to do.

On the other hand, the respondents perceived that they were provided by the school and government with medicines to treat some common ailments that might be inflicted among stranded
students/teachers/evacuees, and kitchen and soup utensils needed for feeding purposes in times that the school is used as evacuation center yet they were low in extent in preparation when it comes to relief goods that are not perishable and can be stored for several days, tents and sleeping bags in case of influx of evacuees, and hygiene kits for personal use while in school during disasters. However, the respondents’ perception with regards to their extent of preparedness in terms of Relief Goods/ Medical Supplies were moderate as shown by the overall mean of 2.70. The results are in contrast to the claim of Polotan-dela Cruz (2010) showing that communities which are usually under staffed and ill-equipped, acquiesce to link up with national government agencies, civil society organizations, and their peers to be able to serve their constituents better.

Moreover, based on the perceptions of teachers, they have information dissemination regarding disaster hazards for the awareness of students and teachers, conducted earthquake and fire drills regularly for school awareness and safety; and coordinated with the local government units and private sectors in case of disasters. With an overall frequency mean of 87.50, the secondary school teachers of the Municipality of Gloria showed high extent of preparedness in terms of Survival and Response Operation Skills noting that no item was perceived under 50% of the total respondents. This means that they have acquired practical skills, appropriate knowledge and advanced strategies to apply their competence in rescue operations. It can be noted also that a significant difference was demonstrated between the level of awareness and extent of preparedness of secondary school teachers in the Municipality of Gloria making the hypothesis rejected. It was attested by the results of the post-hoc analysis when all the indicators of each variable were being compared. However, difference did not exist the level of disaster awareness of public and private secondary school teachers in the Municipality of Gloria in terms of earthquake, flood and typhoon. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted. Similarly, the hypothesis was rejected with regards to the extent of disaster preparedness of public and private secondary school teachers in the Municipality of Gloria in terms of facilities and equipment; and relief goods and medical supplies because a significant difference was shown.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The secondary school teachers in the municipality of Gloria had full and deep knowledge and clear understanding with familiarity on the situation and items given with regards to disaster such as earthquake, flood and typhoon. In terms of facilities and equipment; and relief goods and medical supplies, the respondents have available/existing items but not within their easy access and some are not correctly/well installed like rescue boats or floating vehicles for life saving operations for rescuing stranded students due to flood, relief goods that are not perishable and can be stored for several days, tents and sleeping bags in case of influx of evacuees and hygiene kits for personal use while in school during disasters. With regards to survival and response operation, the respondents perceived that they are prepared having regular conduct of their own earthquake and fire drills for school awareness and safety, coordinated with the local government units and private sectors in case of disasters and information dissemination regarding disaster hazards for the awareness of students and teachers. Hence, they should continue to make strong partnership and collaboration with other sector of the community to support its school disaster risk reduction program. Organization of functional and skilled schools disaster risk reduction management would really help too.
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