



Enhancing Disaster Resilience: An Evaluation of Awareness and Performance of the University-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (UBDRRMC) of the University of Eastern Philippines

BY

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Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the performance of the University-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (UBDRRMC) at the University of Eastern Philippines, with a focus on their awareness and implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) initiatives. The research sought to gauge council members' levels of awareness concerning the existence of the DRRM Plan, the various components of DRRM, and the powers and responsibilities of the UBDRRMC. Furthermore, it aimed to assess the UBDRRMC's effectiveness in executing DRRM activities. Employing a descriptive-evaluative research design, the study yielded notable insights. The findings revealed a substantial awareness among council members regarding the presence of a DRRM Plan within the University of Eastern Philippines. Nevertheless, interviews uncovered ongoing efforts by the UBDRRMC to develop a comprehensive disaster risk reduction and management plan, highlighting the ongoing requirement for collaborative efforts and strategic planning within the university community. In terms of awareness about DRRM components, the study underscored council members' robust comprehension, laying the groundwork for enhanced disaster preparedness, response, and recovery endeavors within the University of Eastern Philippines. Regarding the performance of the UBDRRMC, the data indicated that council members had a clear understanding of their powers and responsibilities, reflecting their preparedness to confront the evolving challenges of disaster risk reduction and management. The interviews further supported these findings, with council members expressing intentions to fulfill their responsibilities during the council's scheduled sessions. The study underscores the council members' comprehensive grasp of their roles within the UBDRRMC framework, thereby enabling well-informed and effective strategies for disaster preparedness and management. Moreover, the results underscore the operational effectiveness of the UBDRRMC, while concurrently highlighting prospects for enhancing their performance in executing DRRM initiatives. Ultimately, the research underscores the consistent significance of optimizing DRRM strategies to elevate disaster resilience within the University of Eastern Philippines. While the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council at the University of Eastern Philippines (UBDRRMC) is presently operational, opportunities for improvement exist. The study's findings, coupled with insights from interviews, indicate that despite the community's considerable disaster preparedness, the UBDRRMC's approach remains largely reactive, marked by sporadic meetings mainly convened during emergencies. Additionally, the sustainability of several DRRM programs is compromised due to their omission from development plans and, notably, local policies. Consequently, it is imperative for the University to establish a comprehensive policy framework that seamlessly integrates and prioritizes DRRM efforts.

Keywords: Disaster Preparedness, Risk Reduction, Disaster Resilience, Management Plan, Awareness, Implementation, Assess, Effectiveness, Collaborative Efforts, Strategic planning, Recovery Endeavors, Reactive Approach, Sustainability, DRRM programs, Development Plans, Local Policies, Comprehensive Policy Framework, Integration, Prioritization, DRRM Efforts.

Article History

Received: 01/04/2023

Accepted: 17/04/2023

Published: 19/04/2023

Vol – 1 Issue – 2

PP: - 31-35

1. INTRODUCTION

Our planet's natural processes, driven by external forces, lead to hazards that can turn into disasters when they intersect with vulnerable populations and assets. Disasters disrupt communities, causing widespread losses exceeding local

coping capacities. Northern Samar, a province of Samar Island, faces recurring hazards like typhoons, floods, earthquakes, landslides, and storm surges due to its geographical location. Despite this, the province continues to grapple with catastrophic events resulting from these natural

hazards, highlighting the ongoing challenge of disaster risk reduction and management.

The University of Eastern Philippines (UEP), situated within Northern Samar, is uniquely positioned as the only comprehensive university and self-governing university town in the province. Its vulnerable topography exposes it to natural disasters, and over time, UEP has suffered frequent disruptions, resulting in economic and environmental damages.

Despite the enactment of the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, UEP lacks a comprehensive policy to effectively address this pressing issue.

Though UEP has taken initiatives such as "Quick Response Teams" and specialized committees, it still lacks an overarching disaster risk reduction and management policy. Recent significant projects include the Center for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management established in 2013, as well as the current University-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (UBDRRMC) created in 2016.

During a Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) orientation, it was emphasized that the mandates of RA 10121 should extend to local colleges and state universities to address disaster concerns promptly. UEP was identified as a vulnerable area within Northern Samar, particularly evidenced during recent typhoons, including those like Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, Typhoon Ruby in 2014, Typhoon Nona in 2015, and the more recent typhoons that have entered the province.

The vulnerability of UEP was confirmed during these typhoons, affecting thousands of families and revealing the society's ability to recover from such devastating events. Subsequent super typhoons, Ruby in 2014 and Nona in 2015, further tested UEP's vulnerability. These events exposed weaknesses in the response of local government units, disaster risk reduction, and management councils, as well as UEP's own initiatives. Inadequate policies hindered effective disaster response and recovery, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive disaster risk reduction and management policy.

As an educational and research institution, UEP has a vital role to play in disaster risk reduction and response. Despite limitations in funding and support, UEP should contribute academically and through policy proposals to the local community. Council member efficiency also presents a challenge, with their other responsibilities potentially dividing their focus on disaster risk reduction and management.

This study is conducted to address these issues and ensure orderly actions are taken during disasters to minimize disruptions to UEP. The aim is to reduce losses, injuries, and damages that have been consistently experienced during previous disasters.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine level of awareness of the UBDRRMC in terms of:

- 1.1 Existence of a Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (DRRMP);
- 1.2 Components of the DRRM; and
- 1.3 Powers and duties of the UBDRRMC.

This also aimed to find out the level of performance of the UBDRRMC as regards the implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) of the University of Eastern Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

Employing a descriptive-evaluative research design, this study aimed to gather data essential for assessing the awareness and performance level of the UBDRRMC. It also provided insights into the University's disaster risk reduction and management system while evaluating the effectiveness of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council of UEP. Additionally, the study contributed to the enhancement of disaster resilience within the University.

The respondents comprised UBDRRMC members, including key administrative figures such as the University President, Vice President for Administration and Finance, and department heads. Other participants encompassed volunteers from organizations like the Red Cross and Boy Scout of the Philippines, members of Barangays Zone 1, 2, and 3 Councils, as well as interested faculty and employees. Community residents were selected based on specific criteria, including being bona fide residents of UEP, homeowners within the University, recipients of UEP's disaster programs and services, and individuals affected by prior typhoons.

To gather data, the researcher employed a survey questionnaire and interview guide questions as the primary instruments. These methods facilitated a comprehensive exploration of various perspectives, enabling a thorough evaluation of the University's disaster risk reduction and management efforts.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Awareness on Existence of DRRM Plan

The data revealed that a substantial portion of council member respondents (42.9%) were very much aware of the existence of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (DRRMP) formulated by the University-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (UBDRRMC). An additional 17.1% were much aware, contributing to a combined awareness level of 60% among these respondents. This indicated a strong level of awareness among council members regarding the presence of a DRRMP at the University of Eastern Philippines.

Awareness on Components of the DRRM

It was found out that the council members possessed a commendable level of awareness concerning the components

of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM). Notably, 22.9% of council member respondents were very much aware of the DRRM components, while an overall mean score of 3.46 suggested that the majority of respondents were much aware of the various aspects encompassed by DRRM. This pointed towards a robust understanding of disaster preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery activities within the council.

Awareness on Powers and Duties of UBDRRMC

The analysis highlighted the council members' varied awareness of their powers and duties as members of the University-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (UBDRRMC). While certain duties such as designing, programming, and coordinating DRRM activities received higher levels of awareness, other responsibilities such as recommending local ordinances had comparatively lower recognition. However, the overall grand mean of 3.47 suggested that the council members exhibited a satisfactory to high level of awareness regarding their powers and duties within the UBDRRMC framework.

Level of Performance of the UBDRRMC

In terms of performance, there is a mixed level of effectiveness in the implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) activities by the UBDRRMC. While the council demonstrated satisfactory performance in certain areas, such as preparedness planning and selected mitigation efforts, the findings revealed opportunities for improvement, particularly in disaster response and conducting comprehensive training programs. The grand mean of 3.05 implied an acceptable level of performance overall. The interview results further emphasized the operational status of the UBDRRMC, albeit with a need for enhancements to optimize their role in disaster preparedness and management.

The data underscored the council members' substantial awareness and understanding of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) components, duties, and the existence of a DRRMP. While the UBDRRMC's performance demonstrated active involvement in disaster preparedness and management, the findings suggested potential areas for improvement to achieve higher levels of effectiveness and response.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In terms of the level of awareness among council member respondents, a predominant majority exhibits a heightened sense of awareness regarding the presence of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Plan. This indicates their possession of prior knowledge about the established procedures for disaster management within the University. Furthermore, a substantial portion of council members are well-acquainted with the intricacies of the DRRM's components, signifying their familiarity with the necessary actions required for the effective implementation of disaster risk reduction and management endeavors. Additionally, a significant number possess a comprehensive

understanding of their respective powers and responsibilities, highlighting their competence in overseeing DRRM operations and addressing emerging challenges.

As to the UBDRRMC members' performance, a notable majority demonstrates a satisfactory level of performance. This suggests the active functioning of the UBDRRMC; however, specific areas have been identified that necessitate refinement, particularly within the domains of preparedness, mitigation, recovery, and rehabilitation.

The implications hold substantial potential for enhancing disaster resilience within the University of Eastern Philippines. The study's outcomes shed light on critical areas where enhancements can be implemented to strengthen the University's capacity to effectively manage and respond to disasters. By recognizing the commendable levels of awareness and understanding among council members regarding the DRRM Plan and its components, the University can leverage this foundation to develop more targeted and strategic disaster preparedness initiatives.

Furthermore, the assessment of UBDRRMC's performance provides valuable insights into areas of strength and those requiring attention. While the Council's operational status is acknowledged, the identification of performance gaps highlights the areas where interventions are necessary to ensure a more comprehensive and proactive approach to disaster risk reduction and management.

Central to the study's message is the importance of aligning DRRM efforts with the broader framework of university development plans and local policies. This integration is pivotal for the sustainability of DRRM programs and initiatives, ensuring that disaster resilience becomes an inherent and enduring aspect of the University's operational ethos.

Therefore, the study not only evaluates the historical state of disaster preparedness and management within the University of Eastern Philippines but also provides a roadmap for enhancing disaster resilience. By capitalizing on the existing awareness and understanding of council members, addressing performance gaps, and strategically integrating DRRM efforts into overarching policies, the University can chart a course towards a more robust, proactive, and resilient approach to disaster management, thereby safeguarding the well-being of its community.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Conduct regular training sessions, workshops, and simulation exercises for council members and relevant university staff. This will ensure that they are well-versed in disaster response protocols, communication strategies, and effective coordination during emergencies.
2. Develop and maintain a comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Plan that encompasses all phases of disaster management,

from preparedness to recovery. The plan should clearly outline roles, responsibilities, and procedures for all council members and stakeholders.

3. Collaborate with university departments and administration to integrate DRRM principles and practices into the broader institutional framework, including development plans, policies, and programs. This will ensure that disaster resilience becomes an integral part of the university's culture.
4. Initiate regular awareness campaigns to educate the university community about disaster risks, preparedness measures, and the importance of active participation. Utilize various communication channels to reach a wider audience.
5. Offer capacity-building programs for council members and relevant personnel to enhance their skills in risk assessment, hazard mapping, data analysis, and effective decision-making during disasters.

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