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**Effectiveness of a Disaster Management Education Program among Youth: A Case Study in Three Disaster-prone Provinces**

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**Abstract**

Environmental Education has emerged to integrate knowledge on the need to conserve and to protect the natural environment and to minimize hazards associated with the polluted environment and natural disasters. The present study aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of an environmental education programme conducted among participants of National Youth Corps (NYC) training centres. NYC recruits two batches per annum within the age group of 15–26 years. The survey was carried out in year 2019 for its first batch at three provinces: Southern, North Central and Sabaragamuwa. A workshop was conducted for all the trainees by the Disaster Management Centre followed by a two-day disaster drill programme to apply the theoretical knowledge into practice. Total intake of 5688 NYC recruits were reported in this year. 1062 of them were selected from 8 NYC training centres out of 14 total centres located within the three provinces that are considered as prone to natural disasters. A quota sampling approach was used to obtain a representative sample from these districts. Selected participants were advised to complete two self-administered questionnaires: one before the workshop and the other soon after completion. Knowledge and attitudes were measured, and the scores were compared with the hypothesis that participants reported higher scores after the workshop. Knowledge and attitudes toward disaster preparedness was evaluated before and after conducting the workshop. 71% from Southern province (Tsunami); 60% from Sabaragamuwa (landslide); and 75% of North Central province (flood) reported prior experience of natural disasters. The level of awareness of having either a local disaster management plan or a local person responsible for disaster preparedness was low. Only 14.8% from Southern, 11.0% from North Central, 17.0% from Sabaragamuwa Province knew the presence of a local DMP in which 15.0%, 19.3% and 21.6% respectively, knew the presence of the DM personal. About 75% from Southern province, 64% from North Central province and 84% from Sabaragamuwa province were not aware of the existence of an early warning system. An increase in the positive attitude was observed and the perceived change in behavioral change of the trainees have increased after the study. They were highly motivated in assisting disasters in a real situation and were willing to volunteer in minimizing the environmental hazards associated with environmental degradation. Despite the high motivation, lack of experience indicates the need for inclusion of disaster management training into National Youth Corps curriculum with annual educational activities after the initial training. The assessment framework established by this study could facilitate regular inspection and verify various disaster management tasks, in-order to enhance youth capability in response to disasters.

**Keywords:** Environmental education, Disaster management, Youth, Knowledge enhancement, Attitude change