

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DISASTER RESPONSE: INSIGHTS FROM KODAGU'S AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: Accidental and extreme calamities that occur as a result of natural processes are called “Natural Disasters”. A natural disaster is a disaster that occurs without any warning. The Kodagu district in Karnataka, India, is a region marked by its unique ecosystem and susceptibility to natural disasters, particularly landslides and floods. This study examines the intersection of disaster management and local self-governance in Kodagu, focusing on community experiences. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative data from interviews with local officials, community leaders, and residents, along with quantitative data on disaster impacts and response outcomes. When disasters occur, sometimes a biological community suffers an irreplaceable loss. The present study aims to focus on the role of local self-government in managing natural disaster in the perspective of affected community with special reference to Kodagu District.

Key Word: Affected Community, Landslides, Local Self Government, Natural Disaster

INTRODUCTION:

Kodagu is one of the most beautiful hill stations in Karnataka. Kodagu's beautiful coffee and spice plantations are the most notable features of the district. This district is blessed with rich flora. This district is also known as “Coffee Cup of India”. It produces 1/3 of India's coffee. It is one of the richest districts in the state in terms of per capita income. Major part of this district consists of rainy season. An analysis of last ten years' data reveals that Madikeri has received the highest rainfall (an average of 3302.46mm). Kodagu was hit hard by Southwest Monsoon Rains in 2018-19. Rainfall during the month of August broke all the records. In 1931, Kodagu had received heavy rainfall. In 2018-19, the district saw the highest rainfall in the last 118 years. The situation in Kodagu had worsened due to heavy rain for over a period of 72 hours. Landslides and floods increased in Madikeri and Somwarpet Taluqs due to heavy rain.

Local self-governance, through institutions such as Panchayats, plays a pivotal role in disaster management at the grassroots level. These bodies are often the first responders in times of crisis, coordinating relief efforts, mobilizing resources, and facilitating rehabilitation. A disaster is a “serious disruption”. Society’s activities cause widespread human material or environmental loss. It is a process where the affected people are beyond their ability to cope using their own resources. Disasters can happen anytime, anywhere. It takes many forms. This study aims to explore the intersection of disaster management and local self-governance in Kodagu, focusing on the community experiences. By understanding these dynamics, the study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on enhancing disaster resilience through local governance and community engagement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Extensive studies have been done on the role of local self-government in managing natural disaster in different parts of the world. **Rajeev M.M (2012) in his study on Disaster Management – The Role of Local Self Government and the Community Participation in Kerala**, this research paper describes the role of local governments in natural disaster management in Keral. About 80% of the world’s disaster prone-people are affected by natural disaster. The need for involvement of local self-governments is undeniable as they can respond quickly, have local knowledge and act as an important medium for creating awareness and imparting education.

Mr. Yadhvir, Ms Sunitha (June 2013), Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Disaster Management, highlights that, Disasters like floods, cyclones, droughts and earthquakes are increasing in India due to environmental degradation, increasing population and nuclear explosions. Disaster relief money, food grains, medical care, clothing, drinking water and other necessities, restoration activities, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of damaged villages and towns are possible with the involvement of local governments.

Democracy Resource Centre (April 2019), The Role of Local Governments in Disaster Management and Earthquake Reconstruction, the study found that, the integration process provides opportunities to clarify and strengthen the roles of local institutions in disaster processes. Local governments have been tasked with creating their own disaster response plans and laws.

A.P Avasthi (2014) Indian Government and Politics, it is widely accepted that self-governing institution at the local level are essential for national growth and for effective people's participation and that they are an integral and indispensable part of the democratic process.

OBJECTIVES:

- To give awareness about the role of Local Self-Governments at the time of disaster
- To educate the people about the consequences of natural disaster
- To motivating them to make use of powers of Local Self-Government at the time of Natural disaster

METHODOLOGY:

Research Methodology includes the collection of data, questionnaire schedule and field work. This research study was conducted in the natural disaster affected area of Kodagu District. This study was done to understand the people's awareness about role of Local Self-Government at the time of Natural Disaster. Secondary data is collected from various journals and articles from internet sources.

Sampling Design: The sample design was selected from the natural disaster affected area people of Kodagu District. The sample size was 30 natural disaster affected respondents. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Table: 1 Profile of the Respondents N = 30

| Gender of the Respondent | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Male | 20 | 67.% |
| Female | 10 | 33% |
| Others | - | - |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data.

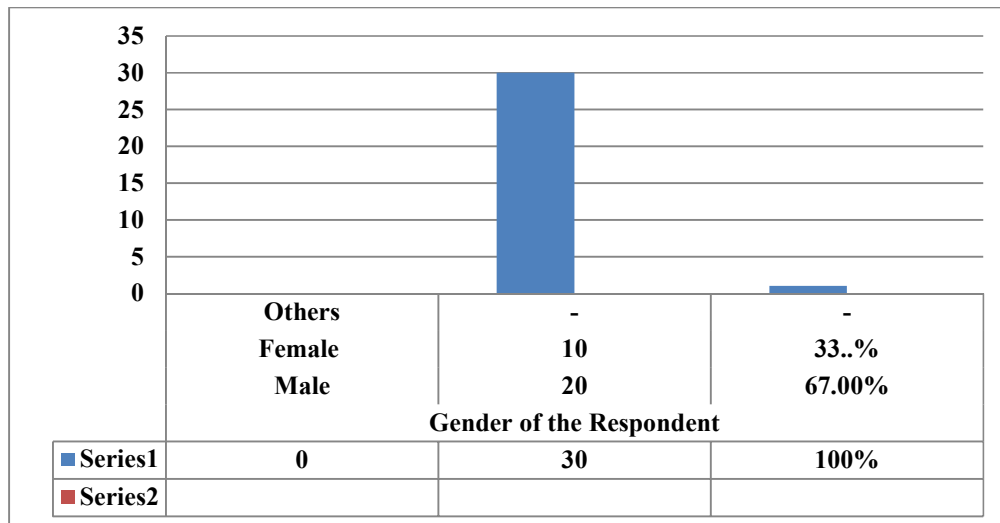


Figure -1 Gender of the Respondent

Figure-1 highlights the profile of the respondents. The views of the people affected by the disaster are different. The study reveals that male (67%) and female (33%) were affected by natural disaster.

Table-2 Age of the Respondent

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age of the Respondent | | |
| 18-24 | 4 | 13% |
| 25-34 | 4 | 13% |
| 35-44 | 12 | 40% |
| 45-54 | 5 | 17% |
| 55 and above | 5 | 17% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data.

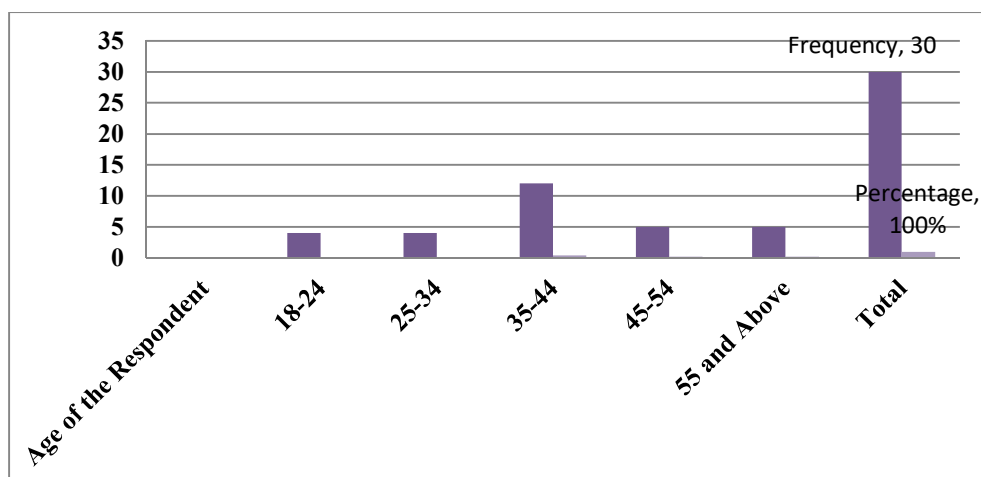


Figure 2 Age of the Respondent

Figure-2 Age profile of the respondents shows that 13% are in the age group of 18-24, 13% in the age group of 25-34, 40% are in the age group of 35-44, 17% are in the age group of 45-54 and 17% are in the age group of 55 and above are affected by the natural disasters.

Table -3 Disasters is most likely to affect the area

| Scale | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|------------|--------------------|------------|
| Earthquake | 1 | 3.0% |
| Floods | 3 | 10% |
| Droughts | - | - |
| Cyclone | - | - |
| Landslide | 26 | 87.0% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data.

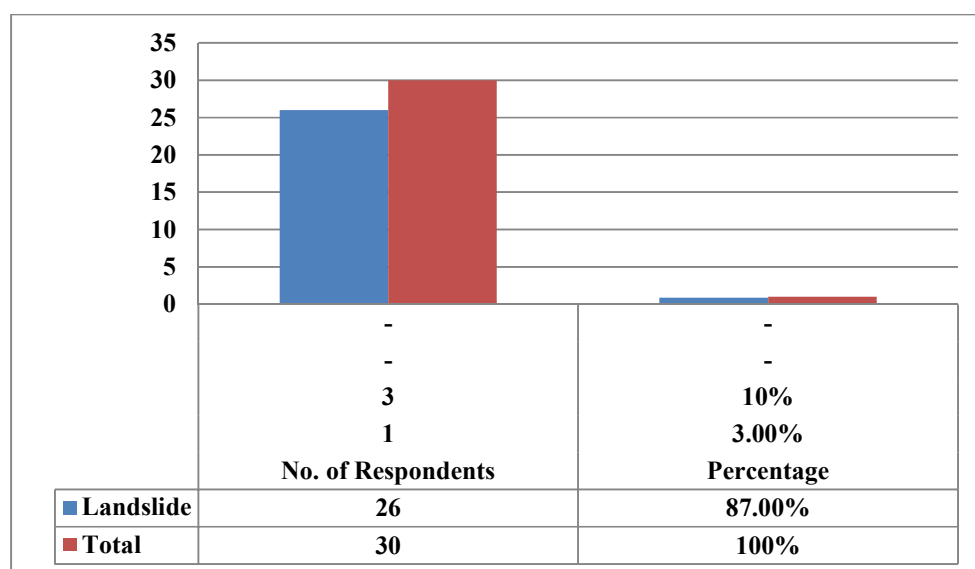
**Figure-3 Disasters is most likely to affect the area**

Figure 3 shows that the respondents were most likely affected by the disasters which occur in their area. Majority of the respondents (87%) were affected by landslides, 10% were by floods, 3% by earthquake. The study can be justified that majority of the respondents were affected by landslides.

Table 4 the disaster management knowledge about the following disasters

| Scale | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|------------|--------------------|------------|
| Earthquake | - | |
| Floods | - | |
| Droughts | - | |
| Cyclone | - | |
| Landslide | 30 | 100% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data.

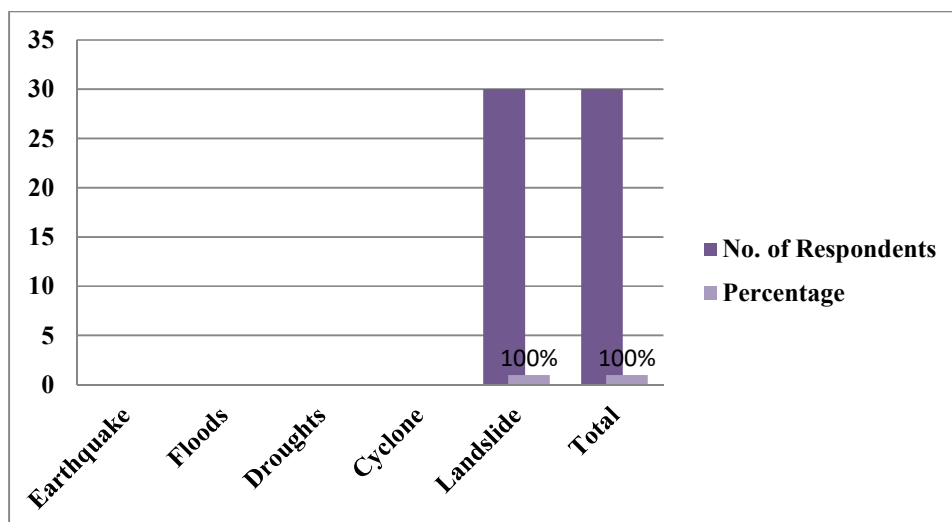


Figure 4 the disaster management knowledge about the following disasters

The study depicts the knowledge of respondents about major disasters. 100% of respondents have knowledge about disaster like landslides. But no one have knowledge about other forms of disasters.

Table 5 Preparedness for any disasters that may occur

| Scale | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--|--------------------|------------|
| I have collected information. | 5 | 17% |
| I have spoken to disaster management representatives of my area. | 10 | 33% |
| I have prepared a family emergency plan. | 10 | 33% |
| I have prepared disaster survival kits. | 5 | 17% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data

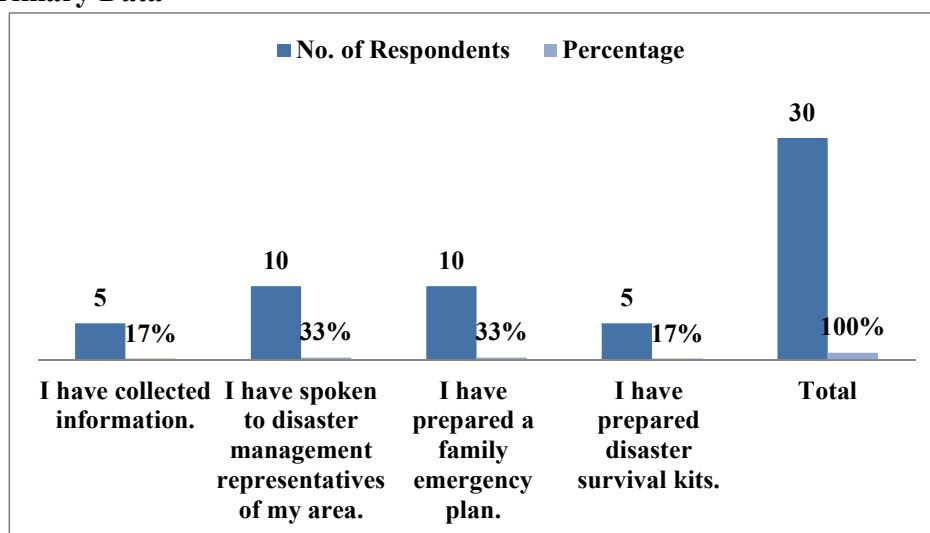


Figure 5 Preparedness for any disasters that may occur

The study reveals that there was a different type of preparedness for disaster which may occur. 17% of the respondents collected information about the disaster, 33% of respondents have spoken to disaster management representatives of their area, 33% prepared a family management plan and 17% prepared disaster survival kits.

Table 6 community receives information about a disaster.

| Scale | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| News Papers | - | |
| Television | 5 | 17% |
| Family or friends | 10 | 33% |
| Cell phone, internet, social media | 10 | 33% |
| Others | 5 | 17% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

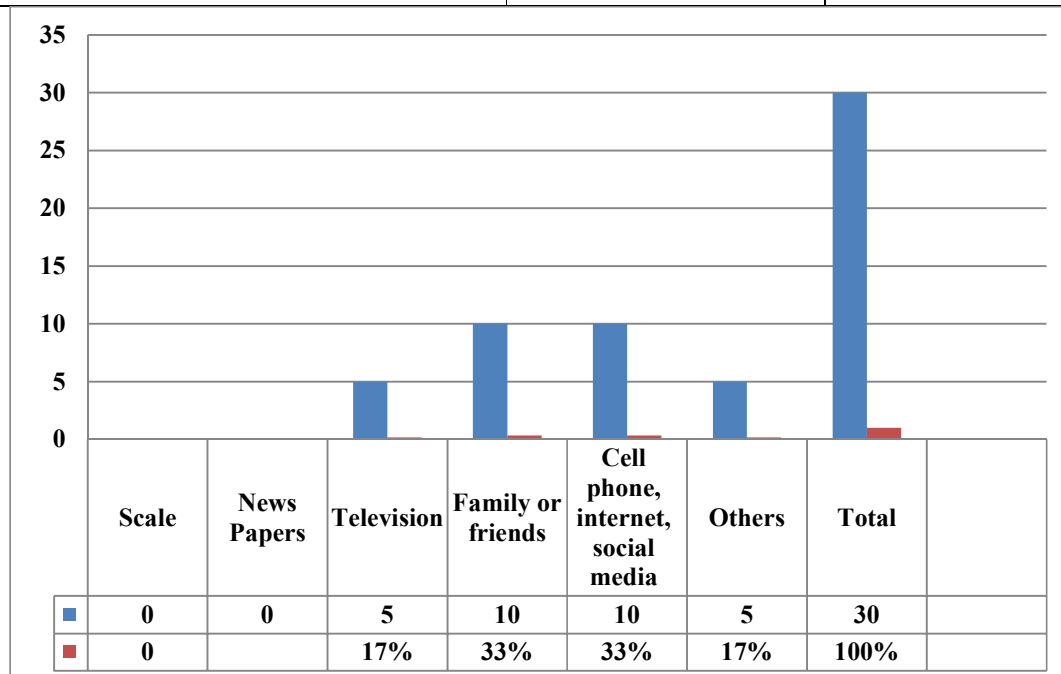


Figure 6 community receives information about a disaster.

Regarding the information the respondent received about the disaster, 17% through television, 33% from family and relatives, 33% from social media, and 17% of respondents from other means.

Table 7 communities have a disaster plan

| Scale | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------|--------------------|------------|
| Yes | 20 | 67% |
| No | 10 | 33% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data.

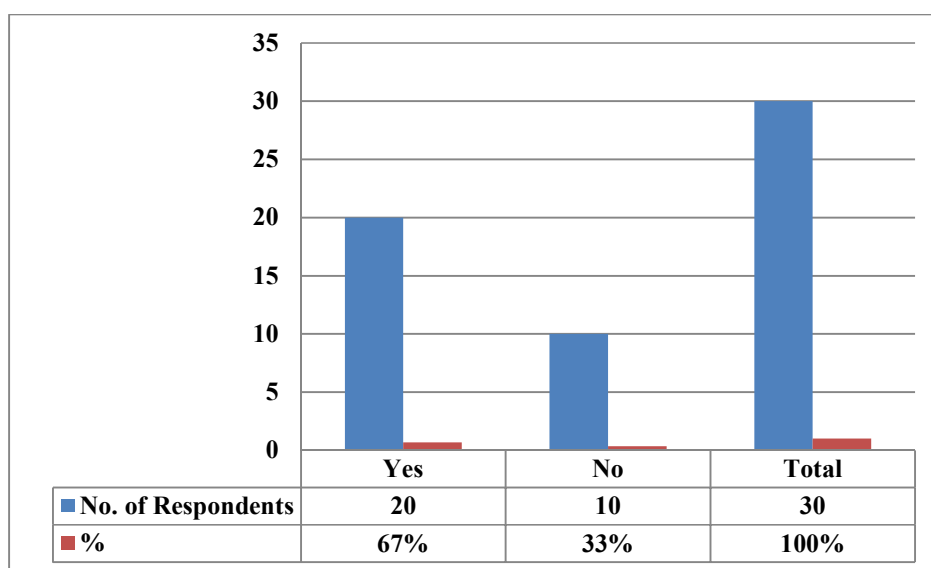


Figure 7 communities have a disaster plan

The study shows that 67% of the respondent have disaster preparedness plan and 33% of the respondent do not have a disaster plan.

Table 8 to prepare and implement the project outside the community

| Scale | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Central government | - | |
| State government | 5 | 16.5% |
| Local government | 20 | 66.5% |
| Non-governmental organizations | 5 | 17% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data.

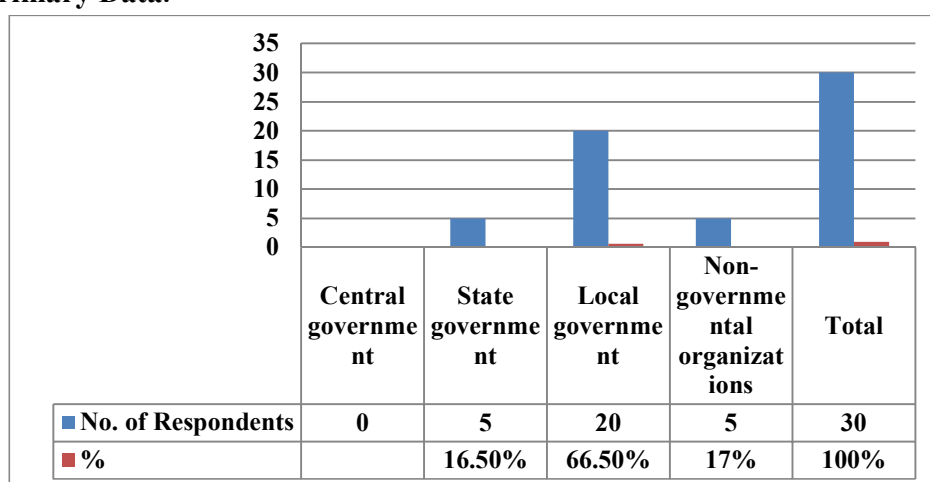


Figure 8 to prepare and implement the project outside the community

The study reveals the fact that most of the respondents, around 66.5%, have the opinion that preparing and implementing the project outside the community is local self-government, 16.5% have the opinion of state government, and 17% have the opinion of non-governmental organizations.

Table 9 responsible for initiating disaster preparedness

| Scale | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Central government | 2 | 7% |
| State government | 3 | 10% |
| Local government | 20 | 66.5% |
| Non-governmental organizations | 5 | 16.5% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data.

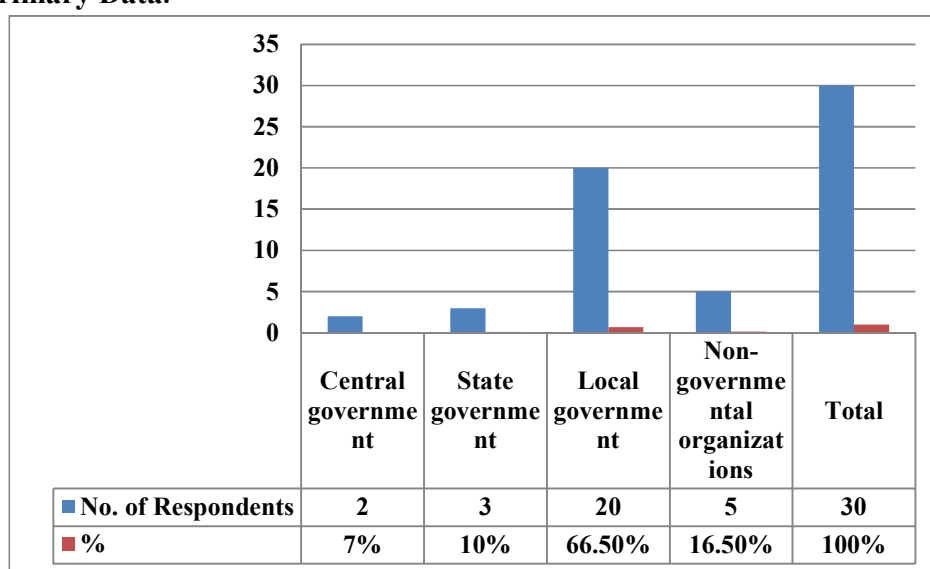


Figure 9 responsible for initiating disaster preparedness

The study shows that most of the respondents, around 66.5%, have the opinion that local self-governments are responsible for preparedness in case of natural disaster, 7% have the opinion that the central government is responsible, 10% have the opinion of state government and 16.5% have the opinion of non-governmental organizations.

Table 10 local government's responsiveness to natural disasters

| Scale | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|--------------------|------------|
| Before the disaster | 3 | 10% |
| After the disaster | 20 | 66.5% |
| In building rehabilitation | 2 | 7% |
| In responding immediately in case of disaster | 5 | 16.5% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data.

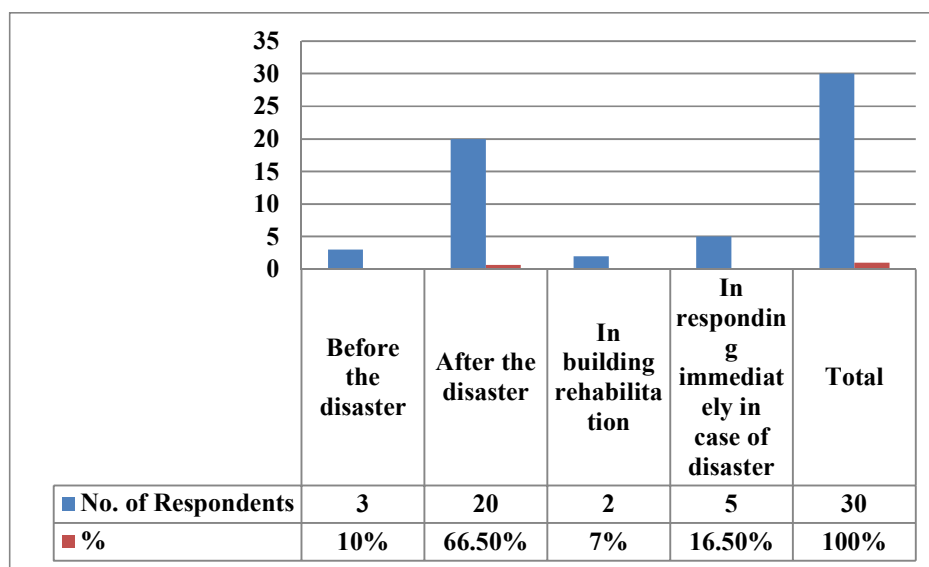


Figure 10 local government's responsiveness to natural disasters

The study shows the responsiveness of local-self-governments at the time of disaster. 10% of respondents are of opinion that, before the disaster, 66.5% are of opinion that after the disaster, 7% of opinion that at the time of building rehabilitation and 16.5% is of opinion that in responding immediately at the time of disaster.

FINDING OF THE STUDY

- Majority of the respondents 67% are Male. This can be justified by the fact that the majority of the respondents are male.
- It can be inferred that majority of the respondents are in the age group 35- 40 (40%) , 18 to 24 (13%) age group and 25 to 34 (13%) age group have the least number of respondents to this study
- The study reveals that the respondents were most likely affected by the disasters that occurred in their area; a majority of the respondents 26 (87%) were affected by landslides.
- The study depicts the knowledge of respondents about major disasters. 100% of respondents have knowledge about disaster like landslides.
- The study reveals that there was a different type of preparedness for disaster which may occur, 33% of respondents have spoken to disaster management representatives of their area, and 33% prepared a family management plan.

- Regarding the information the respondent received about the disaster, 33% from family and relatives and 33% from social media.
- The study shows that 67% of the respondent have disaster preparedness plan
- The study reveals the fact that most of the respondents, around 66.5%, have the opinion that preparing and implementing the project outside the community is local self - government
- The study shows that most of the respondents, around 66.5%, have the opinion that local self-governments are responsible for preparedness in case of natural disaster.
- The study shows the responsiveness of local-self-governments at the time of disaster 66.5% are of opinion that after the disaster.

CONCLUSION

Panchayat Raj institutions are statutory bodies elected by the local people through a sound democratic process with specific responsibilities and duties. Local self-governments have important roles to play in natural and man-made disaster management. The Panchayati Raj institutions, with their proximity to the affected populations, have been pivotal in immediate response efforts, resource allocation, and facilitating community participation. The decentralized nature of these institutions allows for a more tailored and swift response, crucial for minimizing the impacts of disasters in such vulnerable regions.

Local self-governments play an important role in disaster management preparedness, planning and impact and its implementation in the aftermath. Villagers are mostly affected by disasters so Gram Panchayats should play an important role along with government agencies.

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