

ABSTRACT

About 60% of the disasters happened in the world had been reported from the Asian region. It has been found that the incidents of disasters in Sri Lanka are increasing during last two decades. Therefore the Ministry of Education has included disaster preparedness education in to the school curriculum with the hope of improving the knowledge and coping capacity on disasters among the school students as well as the community.

This descriptive cross sectional study was carried out to assess the level and factors associated with knowledge and coping capacity on disasters among grade 10 students in Soranathota Education Zone in Badulla district. A pre tested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. The study population consisted of grade 10 students of the Soranathota Education Zone. Data was collected from all 432 students who were present at the school during the study period from 06 September 2010 to 24 September 2010.

Students were given scores according to their answers to the questions to assess knowledge and coping capacity separately. Coping capacity is the ability of people, organizations and systems, using available skills and resources, to face and manage adverse conditions, emergencies or disasters. After categorizing them according to the scores results showed that the knowledge on disasters of about 72% of the students was adequate while capacity of coping with disasters was inadequate in about 65% of the students.

The presence of a victim of a disaster in the family and previous experience of property damage in a disaster was associated with both knowledge and coping capacity while ethnicity was associated with the coping capacity.

In conclusion, the findings indicated that the knowledge regarding disasters of this group of students was high and the coping capacity was low. Therefore, awareness activities for students regarding disasters should be more practically oriented with simulations and hands-on-training, so that their coping capacity is also increased.

Keywords

Knowledge, Coping capacity, Disasters, Sri Lanka.