

## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

Sri Lanka Army is a valuable resource for the country as a capacity factor in disaster situations. Sri Lanka Army has established wide spread Search and Rescue teams (SAR teams) in all 25 districts in according to the level of risk in each district. SAR teams being one of the front-liners in disaster situations, the Ministry of Disaster Management has arranged specialized training programmes for them to keep their knowledge up to date.

To maintain optimal level, exploring the knowledge, attitudes and practices of SAR teams regarding search and rescue as response to disasters is a salient requirement. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to assess their knowledge, attitude and practices regarding search and rescue as a response to disasters. This study was conducted to assess knowledge, attitude and practices of the SAR teams of the Sri Lanka Army regarding search and rescue as a response to disasters.

### Objectives

To describe the knowledge, attitudes and practices of SAR teams of SL Army regarding search and rescue as a response to disasters.

### Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out from October to December 2017.

5 platoons each were selected randomly from high risk and medium risk district categories and all the 5 platoons were selected from low risk district category as there is no randomization in the low risk district category. 15 platoons were selected from all over the country for data collection and total sample size was 465.

A pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was employed to collect data with prior informed written consent. Data analysis was done using SPSS 21 statistical software.

### Result

Median age of the sample population was 28. Among the studied population 3.2% were officers and 96.8% were soldiers and the majority 80.4% were educated up to G.C.E. (O/L), 62.4% of the population were married.

Among the studied population 9.0% were working as only search and rescue (SAR) team member, 52.9% of the population had undergone training on search and rescue as a response to disasters during the past three years in Sri Lanka and none had undergone training outside the country on search and rescue as response to disasters.

Overall knowledge regarding search and rescue as response to disasters of the study population seem to be good, that is >75 percentage score, 57.2%. Overall attitude were calculated after summation of coded responses, and overall score -20 to 0 was taken as negative attitudes while +1 to +20 was taken as positive attitudes. 93.8% has desirable positive attitudes. 73.5% of total population had participated in search and rescue operation as response to disasters. Overall practices seemed to be poor, that is <75 percentage score, in 71.3% of the population revealing their gaps in experience working at a disaster site.

A statistically significant association was observed with level of education ( $p= 0.001$ ), and designation ( $p= 0.004$ ) and knowledge on search and rescue as a response to disasters. A statistically not significant association was observed with level of education designation, and SAR training and attitude on search and rescue as a response to disasters. A statistically significant association was observed with designation ( $p= 0.021$ ) and practices regarding search and rescue as a response to disasters.

### **Conclusion & Recommendation**

SAR team members should be promoted to get further educational qualification to upgrade their knowledge. Search and rescue drills should be carried out regularly. When conducting knowledge improvement programme it should mainly focus on improve knowledge on first aids, psychological first aids and dead body handling. Knowledge on search and rescue as response to disasters should be incorporated in to the basic training programme for officers and soldiers. When conducting training programme need to be more focus for practical training.