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DISASTER OPERATION READINESS OF THE NUEVA ECIJA SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT STAFF

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Abstract

This study aimed to describe the disaster operation readiness level of the staff of the Department of Social Welfare and Development Region III- Nueva Ecija Extension Office. It revealed that the respondents were slightly ready in terms of pre-disaster phase and almost ready in terms of the onslaught of disaster. It further revealed that monthly income of the respondents, the number of trainings they attended related to disaster operations, and their length of service were significantly related with their level of readiness for the pre- disaster-phase. On the other hand, number of trainings attended, monthly income, and position of the respondents were found to be significantly related with the respondents' readiness for the during- the- disaster- phase. The study further revealed that they were least ready in terms of conducting psycho social interventions to affected families and in managing evacuation centers. It is recommended that all DSWD staff undergo rigid training in terms of disaster management and operation.

Keywords: Social Welfare; Disaster Operation; Readiness.

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1. Introduction

The Philippines is prone to both typhoon and volcanic eruptions. It is prone to typhoon because it lies near the equator and along the biggest ocean in the world, the Pacific Ocean, where cyclones and storms develop according to Britannica Encyclopedia; and it is prone to volcanic eruptions because it also lies within the Pacific Belt, also known as the Pacific Ring of Fire, where there is an estimated 452 volcanoes existing..

Evidently, its geographical location is a grave threat to the beautiful and scenic Philippines. The Mayon Volcano in Albay, the Taal Volcano in Batangas, and the Mount Pinatubo in Zambales all

devastated different parts of the country at different points of time in the past, and they are only a few among the many volcanoes that the country has. Likewise, Typhoons Pablo (2012), Yolanda (2013), Glenda (2014), Lando (2015) and just recently, Ompong (2018), were only a few among the typhoons that claimed lives and devastated the country which is ravaged by around 15 to 20 typhoons a year (PAGASA, 2017).

For Nueva Ecija which is in the central plain of Luzon, the biggest of the three major islands of the Philippines, the threat is more about flooding brought about by heavy rains, overflowing rivers due to forest disturbances as a result of deforestation and illegal mining, as well as spillovers of the biggest dam in the area, the Pantabangan Dam. This is not to say though that the province is totally earthquake-free. Although it is in the central plain of Luzon, it is worth noting that one of its key cities, Cabanatuan City, had made it to the worldwide news headlines when one tall school building in the city fell down, taking hundreds of lives of students and teachers due to an earthquake in 1991.

Given the unfortunate geographical situation of the country in general and of Nueva Ecija in particular, the people have no other choice but to adapt and be prepared in any disaster situation that either typhoon or volcanic and tectonic movements may bring about. Crises situation may be lightened if not totally prevented if the people and all concerned sectors are prepared enough to keep their senses intact and working even amidst difficult disaster situation.

Along with the rescue and medical teams, the social welfare and development department and units are the ones most involved in disaster operations. In fact, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is designated by the National Disaster and Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) as Vice Chairman for Disaster Response Operations. Based on RA 10121, disaster response is the provision of emergency services and public assistance during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce health impact, ensure safety, and meet basic subsistence needs of the affected people. It is predominantly focused on immediate and short term needs and sometimes called disaster relief.

The role of DSWD in disaster operation requires that every DSWD employee must be prepared to respond to the call of duty in times of disaster. Castro (2011) narrated that different actions could be taken from a preventive standpoint. She further emphasized that every employee must be trained on how to act in case of emergency and how to create crisis procedures. Experiences in the past, particularly in the case of Typhoon Yolanda, revealed the weaknesses of the department in terms of responding to disaster situations. These include poor logistics and supply management, lack of trained staff, lack of clear delineation of responsibilities and robust communication line, as well as weak coordination and inability to harness strengths from partner agencies (DSWD Disaster Response Operations Guidelines). Learning from past experiences, it is a must that the DSWD staff be capable to handle disaster. It is also equally important to determine their readiness even long before another disaster comes plaguing the people.

Believing that being prepared solves half the problem in any disaster situation, the proponent conducted this research mainly for the purpose of identifying readiness level of the DSWD staff in the Nueva Ecija Provincial Extension Office as far as disaster response operations was concerned so that early interventions might be implemented if needed. Specifically, the study

sought to determine the profile and readiness level of the staff before disaster and during disaster phases. Likewise, it determined the relationship between some profile variables and the disaster readiness of the DSWD personnel.

2. Materials and Methods

The Philippines is prone to both typhoon and volcanic eruptions. It is prone to typhoon because it lies near the equator and along the biggest ocean in the world, the Pacific Ocean, where cyclones and storms develop according to Britannica Encyclopedia; and it is prone to volcanic eruptions because it also lies within the Pacific Belt, also known as the Pacific Ring of Fire, where there is an estimated 452 volcanoes existing..

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3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Profile of the DSWD Nueva Ecija Extension Office Staff

The result of the study showed that the respondents consisted of 25 or 38.6 % male and 43 or 63.2 female, an indication that the workforce of DSWD Nueva Ecija Extension Office is dominated by women.

Majority of them, 41 or 60.3 percent were holding professional non-supervisory position while 20 or 29.4 were holding sub-professional non-supervisory positions. Only seven (7) or 10.3 % were holding professional supervisory posts. This implies that for every one supervisor in the DSWD Nueva Ecija Provincial Extension Office, there is at least only 8-9 member staff to supervise, which appears to be relatively manageable enough to lead in times of disaster.

Majority of the respondents were single, comprising 37 or 54.4. Only 28 or 41.2 % were married while the rest were either widowed or separated. This indicates that majority of the DSWD respondents may tend to have more undivided time to render services during disaster operations.

In terms of length of service, the study revealed that a large majority of the respondents, comprising 64 or 94.1% were in the service at DSWD for a minimum of one (1) and a maximum of nine (9) years. This suggests that they may not yet be considered seasoned in the field because they may also not have seen much action in times of disaster operation nor attended adequate number of training for effective disaster management operations.

In general, the respondents may be considered capable of learning and performing their tasks during disaster operation because all of them have gone to college and attained education. In fact 61 or 89.7% of them were college graduate and five (5) or 7.4% had already earned master's degree.

Majority of them, 47 or 69.1% had only one (1) child; while 19 or 27.9 % had 2 to 3 children. Only two (2) had 4 to 5 children. This implies that during time of disaster operation, the respondents have children to think of while performing their jobs. This may hinder them from rendering full service during disaster operation, particularly if they had not been prepared or trained enough for the situation.

The study also revealed that in terms of number of trainings attended related to disaster management and operations, a large majority, comprising 46 or 67.6% trained only once in their entire stay at the Extension Office. There was however 12 or 17.6% who had attended 2-3 trainings and 10 or 14.70 who had attended 4 to 9. With these figures, it can be concluded that the respondents did not have enough training and practical experience about disaster operations.

As to the respondents' monthly income, 30 or 44.1% of them were earning P30,001 to P40,000; 14 or 20.6 % were earning between P20,001 to P30,000; and 17 or 25% were earning P10,000 to P20,000. There were four (4) or 5.9 % of them who were earning P10, 000 and below and three (3) or 4.4 % whose monthly earning was P40, 001 and above. This implies that on the average, the respondents are earning beyond minimum wage and therefore may tend to perform to their fullest during disaster situations if only to keep the job that pays them well.

The table below shows the profile of the respondents in detailed

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

| Sex | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Male | 25 | 36.8 |
| Female | 43 | 63.2 |
| Total | 68 | 100 |
| Position | Frequency | Percentage |
| Sub Professional Non- Supervisory | 20 | 29.4 |
| Professional Non- Supervisory | 41 | 60.3 |
| Professional Supervisory | 7 | 10.3 |
| Total | 68 | 100 |
| Civil Status | Frequency | Percentage |
| Single | 37 | 54.4 |
| Married | 28 | 41.2 |
| Widowed | 1 | 1.5 |
| Separated | 2 | 2.9 |
| Total | 68 | 100 |
| Length of Service | Frequency | Percentage |
| 0 to 9 | 64 | 94.1 |
| 10 to 19 | 1 | 1.5 |
| 20 to 29 | 1 | 1.5 |
| 30 to 39 | 2 | 2.9 |
| Total | 68 | 100 |
| Highest Educational Attainment | Frequency | Percentage |
| Two Years College Grad | 2 | 2.9 |
| College Graduate | 61 | 89.7 |

| | | |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Masteral Degree Holder | 5 | 7.4 |
| Total | 68 | 100 |
| Number of Children in the Family | Frequency | Percentage |
| 0 to 1 | 47 | 69.1 |
| 2 to 3 | 19 | 27.9 |
| 4 to 5 | 2 | 2.9 |
| Total | 68 | 100 |
| Number of Training | Frequency | Percentage |
| 0 to 1 | 46 | 67.6 |
| 2 to 3 | 12 | 17.6 |
| 4 to 5 | 6 | 8.8 |
| 6 to 7 | 3 | 4.4 |
| 8 to 9 | 1 | 1.5 |
| Total | 68 | 100 |
| Monthly Income | Frequency | Percentage |
| Below 10,000 | 4 | 5.9 |
| 10,000- 20,000 | 17 | 25 |
| 20,001- 30,000 | 14 | 20.6 |
| 30,001 - 40,000 | 30 | 44.1 |
| 40,001 and above | 3 | 4.4 |
| Total | 68 | 100 |

3.2. Readiness level of DSWD Nueva Ecija Extension Office Staff in Disaster Operation during the Pre-disaster Phase

It was found out in the study that with an overall weighted mean of 2.42, the respondents may generally be considered as only “Slightly Ready” for the Pre- disaster Phase of response operation. This implies that they lack readiness and may find difficulty in conducting Pre Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) (wm=2.44), preparing Predictive Analytics on Humanitarian Assistance (PAHA) (wm=2.26), conducting Family and Community-Based Disaster Response Preparedness (FCBDP) (wm=2.43), and determining the capacity and amenities of evacuation centers and warehouses. Nonetheless, with a weighted mean of 2.57, they may be considered almost ready in coordinating with the Central Office and the National Resource Operation Center (NROC) for stock filing.

The table that follows shows the readiness level of DSWD Staff in disaster operation- during the pre-disaster phase.

Table 2: Disaster Operation level of readiness in terms of Pre-disaster phase

| Pre-disaster | WM | Verbal Description |
|---|-----------|---------------------------|
| Conduct Pre Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) | 2.44 | Slightly Ready |
| Prepare Predictive Analytics on Humanitarian Assistance | 2.26 | Slightly Ready |
| Coordinates with the Central Office and National Resource Operation Center (NROC) for stock filing of goods | 2.57 | Almost Ready |

| | | |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| Conduct Family and Community Based Disaster Response Preparedness (FCBDP) | 2.43 | Slightly Ready |
| Determine the capacity and amenities of evacuation centers and warehouse. | 2.38 | Slightly Ready |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 2.42 | Slightly Ready |

3.3. Readiness level of DSWD Nueva Ecija Extension Office Staff in Disaster Operation during Actual Disaster Operation

The study revealed that with an overall weighted mean rating of 2.86, the respondents can generally be considered “Almost Ready” for operation during the actual disaster phase. They are even “Ready” to spearhead quick response team duty (wm=3.35) and retrieve and validate data from the local government unit (wm=3.32). However, with a weighted mean of 2.35, they were only “Slightly Ready” in conducting psycho-social interventions to the affected families.

While the figures in Table 3 were higher than in Table 2, they still point to the fact that the respondents were way below ready in terms of responding to actual disaster situation. They need to further improve their readiness level.

Table 3: Disaster Operation level of readiness in terms of during disaster phase

| During Disaster | WM | Verbal Description |
|---|-------------|---------------------------|
| Spearhead Quick Response Team Duty | 3.35 | Ready |
| Coordinate with various stakeholders involved in the disaster response and relief operation | 3.07 | Almost Ready |
| Retrieve and validate data from Local Government Unit | 3.32 | Ready |
| Plotting data in Disaster Monitoring Report | 2.82 | Almost Ready |
| Review Disaster Monitoring Report | 2.97 | Almost Ready |
| Prepare narrative and terminal report | 2.84 | Almost Ready |
| Conduct Rapid Damage Assessment and Needs Assessment | 2.56 | Almost Ready |
| Monitor the status of all Evacuation Centers opened including its facility | 3.06 | Almost Ready |
| Assess families evacuated inside Evacuation Center | 2.79 | Almost Ready |
| Manage Evacuation Centers | 2.4 | Slightly Ready |
| Assess LGU for the provision of augmentation support | 2.68 | Almost Ready |
| Provides technical support and assistance to Quick Response Team member | 2.96 | Almost Ready |
| Process Requisition and Issuance Slip (RIS) | 2.72 | Almost Ready |
| Records and maintain database for RIS and Augmentation Report | 2.65 | Almost Ready |
| Manage warehouse/ Stockpile | 2.57 | Almost Ready |
| Receiving and releasing of goods | 2.97 | Almost Ready |
| Manage the repacking of goods | 3.06 | Almost Ready |
| Supervise the delivery of goods to the affected areas | 3 | Almost Ready |
| Facilitate delivery and distribution of goods | 3.09 | Almost Ready |
| Conduct psychosocial interventions to the affected families | 2.35 | Slightly Ready |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 2.86 | Almost Ready |

3.4. Relationship between Profile and Pre-disaster Readiness Level

It was found out in the study that the length of service, number of training, and monthly income were significantly correlated with the respondents' pre-disaster level of readiness. All other profile variables studied were of no significant relationship at all. This connotes that the longer the respondents were in service, the more attendance to training they had, and the higher their monthly income were, the more that they would tend to be ready for pre-disaster operation phase.

Table 4: Relationship between the profile of the respondents and their pre-disaster level of readiness

| Profile | Pre-Disaster | | |
|---|-------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| | Correlation value | p-value | Interpretation |
| Age | .208 | .089 | No significant relationship |
| Sex | -.198 | .106 | No significant relationship |
| Civil Status | .037 | .764 | No significant relationship |
| Highest Educational Attainment | .168 | .172 | No significant relationship |
| Position | .192 | .116 | No significant relationship |
| Length of Service | .276* | .024 | Significant relationship |
| Number of Children in the Family | .083 | .502 | No significant relationship |
| Number of Training Attended Related to Disaster Operation | .421** | .000 | Significant relationship |
| Monthly Income | .246* | .043 | Significant relationship |

*correlation is significant @ 0.05 level; **correlation is significant @ 0.05 level

3.5. Relationship between Profile and Actual Disaster Readiness Level

In terms of readiness for actual disaster operation, it was found out that only position, number of trainings attended related to disaster operation, and monthly income were found to be significantly related. This implies that higher the position of the respondent was, the more attendance to training they had, and the higher their monthly income they received, the more that they would tend to be ready for the actual disaster operation phase.

Table 5: Relationship between the profile of the respondents and their during disaster level of readiness

| Profile | During Disaster | | |
|---|-------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| | Correlation value | p-value | Interpretation |
| Age | .168 | .172 | No significant relationship |
| Sex | -.059 | .634 | No significant relationship |
| Civil Status | .021 | .867 | No significant relationship |
| Highest Educational Attainment | .175 | .152 | No significant relationship |
| Position | .288* | .017 | Significant relationship |
| Length of Service | .227 | .065 | No significant relationship |
| Number of Children in the Family | .125 | .309 | No significant relationship |
| Number of Training Attended Related to Disaster Operation | .507** | .000 | Significant relationship |
| Monthly Income | .417** | .000 | Significant relationship |

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the result of the study, it can be concluded that the staff of the DSWD Nueva Ecija Extension Office are capable of performing the task of responding to disaster situations either before or during actual disaster operation. However, they lack the necessary knowhow to respond to their fullest and as length of service, position, monthly income and number of trainings attended are significantly related to their readiness, it is recommended that they be provided with more training on disaster management and operation on the basis of the variables of length of service, position, and monthly income.

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