
JUNIOR EMERGENCY RESCUE UNIT PARTICIPATION ON TEACHERS' {DRRM} DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the level of Junior Emergency Rescue Unit (JERU) participation among 92 learners and the disaster risk reduction (DRR) practices of 92 teachers in elementary schools of Pangantucan South District, Division of Bukidnon during the School Year 2025–2026. It examined learners' participation in terms of knowledge and awareness of emergency procedures, involvement in training and drills, engagement in emergency response, and motivation, attitude, and commitment, as well as teachers' DRR practices in disaster preparedness and planning, mitigation and safety measures, communication and awareness, and capacity building. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected through a researcher-made questionnaire (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.937), with total enumeration for teachers and simple random sampling for learners. Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson r were used in the analysis. Findings showed that learners demonstrated full participation in JERU activities, while teachers consistently practiced DRR measures. However, no significant relationship was found between learners' participation and teachers' DRR practices. The study recommends continued learner and parent participation, enhanced DRR programs by teachers and administrators, and further research to identify factors that may strengthen coordination between learner engagement and institutional DRR initiatives.

KEYWORDS: *DRRM, Disaster, Rescue, Participation.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Philippines has faced increasing exposure to natural hazards, including typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and floods. This growing vulnerability places

significant pressure on public schools, which were expected to serve not only as centers of learning but also as safe spaces for disaster preparedness and response. Teachers often struggled to implement disaster preparedness measures amid added responsibilities, without clear guidance, sufficient resources, or proper training, leading to inconsistent practice and uncertainty during emergencies. Meanwhile, learners participated in disaster drills that were often limited to routine exercises, offering little opportunity to develop practical skills, awareness, and confidence needed in actual disaster situations. As a result, both teachers and learners faced challenges in building a strong, proactive, and inclusive culture of disaster resilience within their schools. One of the most overlooked aspects in the implementation of DRR in schools was the meaningful participation of learners, particularly those organized into school-based emergency groups like the Junior Emergency Rescue Unit (JERU). Although JERU existed in various secondary schools as a student-led auxiliary to DRR implementation, it is often regarded as a symbolic organization with little to no structured involvement in actual preparedness, response, or recovery activities. This underutilization reflects a systemic gap: schools were failing to harness the leadership, energy, and potential of learners as co-implementers of safety and resilience programs. Moreover, the collaboration between teachers and JERU remained loosely defined, with many teachers receiving minimal training or guidance on how to incorporate student units into DRR practice.

Furthermore, teachers who were the frontliners of school DRR efforts faced numerous barriers in executing effective risk reduction practices. These included inadequate professional development, unclear operational frameworks, and minimal institutional support. In some cases, teachers are assigned DRR responsibilities without proper orientation or without support from trained learners' units like JERU. The absence of empirical studies exploring how learners' involvement affected or supported teacher practices in DRR highlighted another critical gap. Without concrete data, school administrators and policymakers cannot fully evaluate the potential of JERU in enhancing teachers' capacity to execute disaster preparedness, response coordination, and risk mitigation. This lack of integration results in missed opportunities to develop a participatory and collaborative school safety framework grounded in both adult and youth engagement.

Recent literature points to the value of participatory approaches in disaster education and risk reduction. For instance, Gonzales and Recla (2022) emphasize that learner-led participation fosters intergenerational learning and builds stronger community networks for disaster

resilience. Their findings suggested that when learners are empowered through structured roles, both their peers and teachers gained confidence in emergency response. Similarly, Ortega and Manalo (2021) found that teacher-learners' coordination during drills not only improved the morale of school staff but also enhanced the overall efficiency and effectiveness of emergency operations. These insights reinforced the potential of JERU to serve as an essential partner in school-wide DRR initiatives.

Additionally, the Department of Education had recognized the importance of learners' engagement in disaster preparedness. Through DepEd Order No. 50, s. In 2011, when DRR was institutionalized in the basic education sector, schools were encouraged to adopt child-centered and context-specific approaches. Dizon and Rosales (2023) reported that involving learners in school disaster simulations enhanced teacher preparedness, strengthened school coordination, and cultivated leadership among students. Furthermore, Luna and Caballero (2022) documented that schools with active youth emergency groups experienced more organized and responsive DRR executions compared to those with inactive or symbolic units. Given these gaps and the emerging support from current literature, this study sought to investigate the extent and nature of Junior Emergency Rescue Unit participation in teachers' disaster risk reduction practices. Specifically, it aimed to explore how learner-led emergency units can be supported, complemented, and potentially enhance the effectiveness of teacher-implemented DRR programs in elementary schools. By examining this dynamic, the research aspires to contribute to the development of inclusive, evidence-based strategies that promote school resilience and shared responsibility in disaster preparedness.

Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored in the Participatory Development Theory of Paulo Freire (1970), which posits that sustainable development outcomes are best achieved when all stakeholders actively participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives. In the context of school-based disaster risk reduction (DRR), this theory supports the inclusion of learners, specifically those organized through the Junior Emergency Rescue Unit (JERU), as vital contributors to school preparedness and resilience. Rather than being passive recipients of safety protocols, learners could function as active agents of change, capable of reinforcing disaster risk awareness and supporting emergency operations within the school community.

The active involvement of learners in DRR initiatives was not simply an extension of learners' leadership; rather, it reflected the evolving philosophy of disaster education as a collaborative process. This aligned with the principles laid out in Republic Act No. 10121

(2010), also known as the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, which mandated a multi-stakeholder approach and emphasized community-based disaster preparedness. Within schools, the institutionalization of DRRM through DepEd Order No. 50, s. 2011 further legitimized the roles of learners in risk management structures, ensuring their participation is recognized and structured within school-based policies.

In this study, the independent variable was the extent of participation of JERU members, which included but was not limited to hazard mapping, evacuation drills, first-aid training and simulations, awareness campaigns, peer education, and coordination with local disaster units. These activities reflected both functional participation and capacity-building objectives. The dependent variable was the teachers' DRR practices, which involved planning and preparation, integration of DRR into curriculum and instruction, execution of safety drills, equipment maintenance, and collaboration with stakeholders.

The conceptual linkage between the two variables lies in the proposition that higher learner engagement, particularly when organized and purposeful through JERU, leads to enhanced teacher practice in DRR. This is due to several reinforcing factors: shared leadership, expanded human resource capacity, improved simulation of emergency scenarios, and heightened school-wide risk awareness.

Support for this framework was evident in contemporary Filipino research. Cardeño and Cabatingan (2022) demonstrated that learner-led DRR initiatives, such as peer-led emergency teams, increased the practical preparedness of teachers and school leaders. Likewise, Tadana and Reyes (2023) observed that schools with functional JERU programs reported not only more frequent drills but also greater teacher confidence in implementing them. In another related study, Delos Reyes and Bautista (2021) noted that learner participation in school-based DRR committees fostered a stronger sense of shared responsibility, prompting teachers to design more interactive and context-sensitive DRR instruction.

Moreover, this study was informed by the Whole School Approach to DRR, which was promoted by the Department of Education (DepEd, 2023) in its updated DRRM framework. This approach emphasizes systemic preparedness through the collective involvement of administrators, teachers, learners, parents, and community partners. Within this model, the institutionalization of learner groups such as JERU serves as a structural reinforcement, making DRR a sustained and integrated practice rather than an occasional compliance activity. It also allowed teachers to shift from isolated implementation to collaborative execution, supported by an informed and trained student body.

In sum, the conceptual framework of this study argued that the participation of JERU members was a catalyst for improved teacher DRR practices, driven by co-responsibility, increased preparedness, and expanded community involvement. It aligns with both theoretical and policy-based imperatives, particularly Participatory Development Theory, the Whole School Approach, RA 10121, and DepEd DRRM guidelines. This dynamic interaction promoted a school culture that was not only disaster-aware but also disaster-resilient, fostering a safer learning environment for all.

As shown in the schematic diagram, the independent variable on the left side contained the junior emergency rescue unit participation of the learners in terms of knowledge and awareness of emergency procedures, participation in emergency training and drills, active engagement in emergency response, and motivation, attitude, and commitment. On the right side of the diagram were the teachers' disaster risk reduction practices in terms of disaster preparedness and planning, mitigation and safety measures, communication and awareness, capacity building, and professional development. Figure 1 presents the schematic diagram of the study.

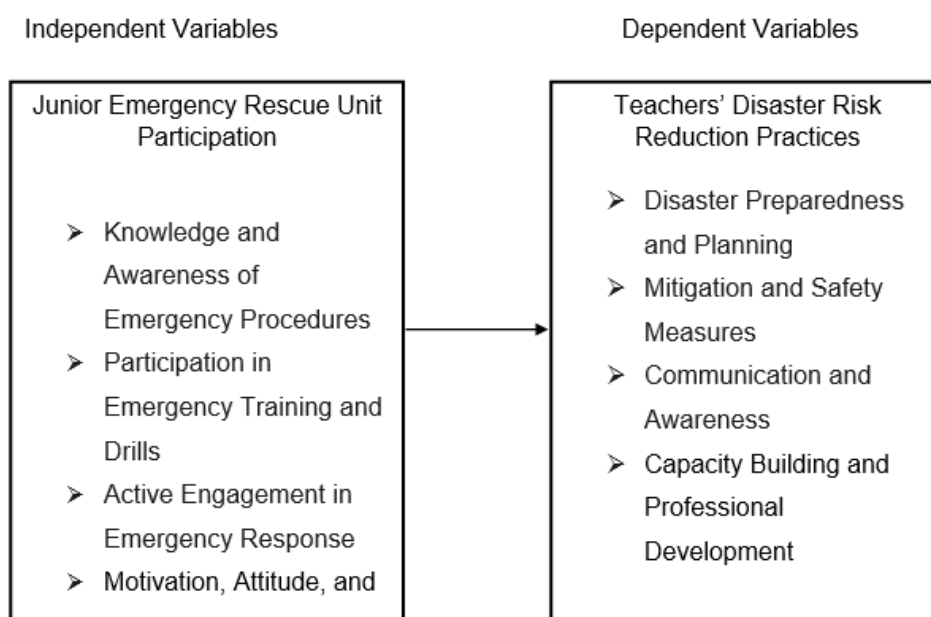


Figure 1. A schematic diagram showing the relationships of variables.

Significance of the Study

This study was crucial in understanding how the active participation of the education (DRR) practices within school settings. It contributed significantly to the efforts of institutionalizing a safety culture in basic education as mandated by DepEd and national DRRM policies.

To the learners, this study empowered them by validating their role in school-based disaster preparedness. By participating in JERU activities, learners gained practical knowledge and confidence in emergency response, fostering leadership, responsibility, and life-saving skills. It promoted the belief that learners are not passive recipients of safety measures but are active agents of change in ensuring school resilience.

To the teachers, teachers benefit from this study by recognizing how collaborative engagement with student emergency units could enhance their preparedness and confidence in responding to disasters. It sheds light on how learner participation supports teachers' professional growth in DRR, making preparedness practices more efficient, inclusive, and sustainable. This research also promotes reflection and improvement of instructional integration of DRR.

To the School Administrators. School heads and DRRM coordinators were able to use the findings of this study to design inclusive and sustainable school safety programs. It supports evidence-based planning and capacity building, ensuring that DRR protocols are not only teacher-led but are institutionalized across all levels of school personnel and learners. It also encouraged the institutionalization of JERU in the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and DRRM programs.

To the Future Researchers. This study opened avenues for further research in disaster education, youth participation, and school-based emergency management. It offered a foundation for longitudinal or comparative studies that may explore the long-term impact of learner involvement on overall school safety. Future researchers may build on this study by integrating digital innovations, psychosocial aspects, or localized hazards in DRR practices.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined in this study to ensure easy understanding.

Active Engagement in Emergency Response. Active Engagement in Emergency Response refers to the meaningful and hands-on participation of learners and staff in emergency activities such as drills, simulations, hazard identification, and first-aid response. It went beyond passive involvement to active contribution in planning and execution.

Capacity Building and Professional Development. Capacity Building and Professional Development referred to organized efforts, including training, seminars, and workshops, that aimed to enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of teachers and staff in disaster preparedness and response.

Communication and Awareness. Communication and Awareness referred to the clear dissemination of safety information, risk alerts, and evacuation plans, as well as raising awareness on hazards through campaigns, posters, and school announcements.

Disaster Preparedness and Planning. Disaster Preparedness and Planning refer to the structured and proactive steps taken by the school to anticipate, plan for, and reduce the risks associated with natural and human-induced hazards. It involves the creation of school DRRM plans, evacuation maps, and emergency protocols.

Junior Emergency Rescue Unit (JERU) Participation. Junior Emergency Rescue Unit (JERU) Participation refers to the involvement of trained learners in organized emergency response teams within the school, taking part in planning, drills, first-aid, peer education, and coordination with teachers and school authorities during emergencies.

Knowledge and Awareness of Emergency Procedures. Knowledge and Awareness of Emergency Procedures refer to the extent to which both learners and teachers understand the steps to be taken during specific emergencies, including earthquake duck-cover-hold techniques, fire exits, lockdowns, and first response measures.

Mitigation and Safety Measures. Mitigation and Safety Measures refer to the preventive actions implemented to reduce or eliminate disaster risks. These included securing furniture, checking electrical wiring, establishing hazard-free zones, and installing fire extinguishers and warning systems.

Motivation, Attitude, and Commitment. Motivation, Attitude, and Commitment refer to the psychological and emotional readiness of teachers and learners to engage in DRR activities. This included willingness to train, positive disposition toward safety education, and consistent involvement in school DRR initiatives.

Participation in Emergency Training and Drills. Participation in Emergency Training and Drills involves attending, organizing, or leading school-based activities designed to prepare the school community for emergencies. These included earthquake drills, fire simulations, search and rescue practices, and first-aid workshops.

Teachers' Disaster Risk Reduction Practices. Teachers' Disaster Risk Reduction Practices were the specific actions and routines that teachers implemented to ensure safety before, during, and after disasters. This included integrating DRR into lessons, leading drills, preparing emergency kits, and maintaining coordination with DRRM officials.

The Methodology

Research Design

The investigation utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. The data gathered was analyzed quantitatively. Descriptive method will be used for the study to describe the junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners in terms of knowledge and awareness of emergency procedures, participation in emergency training and drills, active engagement in emergency response, and motivation, attitude, and commitment; find out the teachers' disaster risk reduction practices in terms of disaster preparedness and planning, mitigation and safety measures, communication and awareness, and capacity building and professional development and correlate the significant relationship between the level of junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners and teachers' disaster risk reduction practices.

Research Locale

This study will be conducted in the elementary schools under the jurisdiction of Pangantucan South District, one of the educational districts within the Division of Bukidnon, during School Year 2025–2026. The Pangantucan South District is a rural educational cluster situated in the municipality of Pangantucan, located in the southwestern part of Bukidnon Province, Northern Mindanao, Philippines.

Pangantucan is a first-class municipality known for its rich agricultural lands, diverse cultural heritage, and proximity to the majestic Mount Kalatungan Range Natural Park, a protected area that serves as one of the biodiversity hotspots in the country. The municipality is predominantly inhabited by indigenous people (notably the Manobo tribe), lowland settlers, and farmers whose livelihood centers on corn, sugarcane, coffee, banana, and vegetable farming. Despite its vast natural resources and growing population, many areas within the municipality remain geographically isolated and disadvantaged, posing challenges to the equitable delivery of basic education services.

The Pangantucan South District office is based at Langcataon Central Elementary School, which serves as the district's administrative and instructional hub. The district encompasses several elementary schools scattered across remote barangays, namely: Kipaducan Elementary School, New Iloilo Elementary School, Balogo Elementary School, Malipayon Elementary School, Kimanait Elementary School, Payad Elementary School, Bangahan Elementary School, and Upper Rancho Elementary School.

These schools cater to multi-grade learners and operate in far-flung communities characterized by rugged terrain, intermittent access to electricity and internet, and limited

transportation infrastructure. Teachers often walk long distances or ride motorcycles over unpaved roads just to reach their stations, while learners cross rivers or footpaths to attend classes.

Given these contextual realities, Pangantucan South District presents a relevant and meaningful setting for studying educational interventions, particularly those aimed at improving school-based programs such as disaster risk reduction, learner support, and inclusive education. The selected schools provide a rich ground for observing the implementation of educational practices in a rural, multicultural, and disaster-prone context, making the findings of this study potentially valuable for both local and national education stakeholders.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consist of 92 elementary teachers from schools in Pangantucan South District, Division of Bukidnon, during School Year 2025–2026. A mixed sampling procedure is employed in this study. Total enumeration sampling is utilized for the teacher-respondents to ensure complete representation of all elementary teachers who possess the characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study. This approach is appropriate given the manageable size and well-defined nature of the teacher population and allows for comprehensive data collection without sampling bias.

For the learner-respondents, simple random sampling is employed. This probability sampling technique ensures that each intermediate learner is given an equal chance of selection, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample while addressing practical considerations related to time and resources. In this study, the sampling units are the individual teachers and learners who constitute the defined populations. The combined use of total enumeration for teachers and random sampling for learners strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings by aligning the sampling techniques with the characteristics and sizes of the respondent groups.

Sampling Procedure

A mixed sampling procedure was employed in this study, combining total enumeration sampling for teacher-respondents and probability sampling, specifically simple random sampling, for learner-respondents. Sampling refers to the process of selecting a portion of a population to represent the entire group in a study, allowing researchers to draw valid conclusions about the population (John W. Creswell, 2021). The use of different sampling

techniques was considered appropriate due to variations in population size, accessibility, and the roles of respondents within the school setting.

Total enumeration sampling was used for the teacher-respondents. Also known as census sampling, this technique involves including the entire population that possesses the characteristics relevant to the study (Taherdoost, 2022). This method was appropriate because the teacher population was relatively small and manageable. Including all teachers ensured complete representation of those directly involved in instructional practices and the implementation of school-based programs.

Using total enumeration minimized sampling bias and strengthened the reliability of the findings since data were collected from all eligible respondents rather than from a subset. According to John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark (2018), this approach enhances the accuracy of results and allows for more comprehensive analysis within the defined population.

For the learner-respondents, simple random sampling was utilized. Simple random sampling is a probability sampling technique in which each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Daniel, 2019). This method was appropriate due to the relatively large learner population and practical limitations in terms of time and resources. Random selection helped ensure that the sample represented the characteristics of the learner population while reducing selection bias.

Overall, the combined use of total enumeration for teachers and simple random sampling for learners ensured both completeness and representativeness of the data, thereby strengthening the methodological rigor of the study (Creswell, 2021).

Research Instruments

The research instrument utilized in this study is researcher-made. It will be validated content and pilot tested to test its validity and reliability. It will involve 30 elementary learners and 30 elementary teachers in the pilot testing of the research questionnaire. The two questionnaires are the junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners and teachers' disaster risk reduction practices. The junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners includes the knowledge and awareness of emergency procedures, participation in emergency training and drills, active engagement in emergency response, and motivation, attitude, and commitment. The teachers' disaster risk reduction practices consider disaster preparedness and planning, mitigation and safety measures, communication and awareness, and capacity building and professional development.

Scoring Procedure

The Likert Scale was used to answer questions on the junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners, following the scoring procedure:

Numerical Rating	Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.29-5.00	Strongly Agree	Full Participation
4	3.40-4.19	Agree	Regular Participation
3	2.60-3.39	Neither	Occasional Participation
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree	Minimal Participation
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree	No Participation

The Likert Scale was used to answer the teachers' disaster risk reduction practices, following the scoring procedure:

Numerical Rating	Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.29-5.00	Strongly Agree	Consistently Practiced
4	3.40-4.19	Agree	Frequently Practiced
3	2.60-3.39	Neither	Occasional Participation
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree	Occasionally Practiced
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree	Not Practiced

Data Gathering Procedure

A formal request for the data collection was secured from the Schools' Division Superintendent, then to the Public Schools' District Supervisor and school administrators, to allow the researcher to administer the survey questionnaire. The researcher personally visits the schools to administer and retrieve the questionnaire. As soon as the research questionnaires were collected, the researcher immediately checked, tallied, tabulated, presented, and analyzed the data to be gathered as part of the main text of this study.

Treatment of Data

The following statistical procedures were employed to answer the specific problems of the study:

Problem 1 and 2: Descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation will be used to determine the level of junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners and teachers' disaster risk reduction practices.

Problem 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (Pearson r) was used to establish the relationships of the variables between the level of junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners and teachers' disaster risk reduction practices.

FINDINGS

The level of junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners in terms of knowledge and awareness of emergency procedures, in terms of participation in emergency training and drills, active engagement in emergency response, and motivation, attitude, and commitment perceived by the teachers was full.

Level of teachers' disaster risk reduction practices in terms of disaster preparedness and planning, mitigation, safety measures, communication and awareness, capacity building, and professional development were consistently practiced.

There was no significant relationship between the level of junior emergency rescue unit participation of learners and teachers' disaster risk reduction practices.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that learners exhibited full participation in the Junior Emergency Rescue Unit, demonstrating high levels of knowledge and awareness of emergency procedures, active involvement in emergency training and drills, engagement in emergency response activities, and positive motivation, attitude, and commitment as observed by their teachers.

Likewise, teachers consistently practiced disaster risk reduction measures, including disaster preparedness and planning, implementation of mitigation and safety measures, promotion of communication and awareness, and engagement in capacity building and professional development, reflecting their dedication to maintaining a safe and resilient school environment.

Despite the strong participation of learners and consistent practices of teachers, the study revealed no significant relationship between the level of learners' participation in the Junior Emergency Rescue Unit and teachers' disaster risk reduction practices. This indicates that learners' engagement in rescue activities and teachers' professional DRR practices function independently, highlighting the need to explore additional strategies to bridge learner involvement and institutional disaster preparedness initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Learners may continue to actively participate in the Junior Emergency Rescue Unit and apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations.

Parents are encouraged to support their children's involvement by reinforcing safety practices at home and encouraging participation in community disaster preparedness activities.

Teachers and school administrators may maintain and further enhance disaster risk reduction (DRR) practices through regular drills, training, and communication campaigns. They are encouraged to develop integrated programs that link learners' participation in rescue units with school-wide DRR initiatives, fostering a more coordinated approach where students' skills and teachers' practices complement each other for greater community resilience.

Since the results and findings of the study were insignificant, the teachers and the school heads, as well as parents, may continue to develop the skills in order to increase the practices of the Junior Emergency Rescue Unit and included in the curriculum of the school.

Future researchers are recommended to explore additional factors that may influence the relationship between learners' participation in emergency rescue units and teachers' DRR practices. Researchers may also examine strategies to enhance collaboration among students, teachers, and parents in disaster risk reduction.

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