

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN KASHMIR VALLEY**Khurshid Ahmad Mir**, Research Scholar,

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Abstract:- Social work education is crucial in the development of professionals who are equipped to serve diverse populations and implement varying programs. It is meant to the graduates' competence in the socio-economic environment. In particular, it should ensure that social workers are endowed with adequate competencies in disaster risk reduction and the training of individuals, groups, and communities in resilience to disasters. The aim of this paper is to establish whether students acquire knowledge and skills in disaster risk management while at the university. It was found that the possibility is high that they would graduate without adequate knowledge on the subject with regard to related protocols, tools, and instruments. It is therefore, crucial that social work education deliberately incorporates disaster risk reduction in its curriculum in Kashmir Valley.

Keywords:- Social Work, Disaster, and Disaster Risk Reduction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social work is a dynamic profession that deals with diverse situations and problems that affect humanity. The problems and situations that social workers deal with vary in terms of type, magnitude, and intensity. These problems include disasters of varying form and complexity. Disasters worldwide cause mass destruction to infrastructure, loss of human lives, economic downturn, and environmental degradation (Kadi, 2006). Kashmir valley, like other regions, also experiences natural disasters. They comprise mainly drought, floods, wildfires, animal diseases, earthquakes and tremors, pest infestations, epidemics, and HIV and AIDS.

Drought is experienced country-wide; floods occur during the rainy season, that is, from September to March; and veld fires are regular occurrences during the dry months of April to November with a peak in July (United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP) 2009). In Sep 2014, the state experienced the worst floods in 6 administrative districts, cities, towns, and villages. The floods caused loss of life, According to government record 300 people dead, 87 missing, 25 injured, 5,50,000 displaced, and 2,31,361 minor shelter damaged. The environment, and crops, totally damaged in September 2014 flood. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2008) asserts that the recorded economic costs of disasters have been increasing over decades.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Social work education should equip practitioners to undertake an analysis of hazards and determine the likely consequence for individuals, groups, and communities. Disaster risk Management makes predictions about disaster occurrences based on the historical experiences of communities. Therefore, disaster risk management is topical to social work education and practice. It is necessary to develop knowledge, strategies, approaches, and methodologies which are fundamental to building community resilience to disasters. It might be assumed that social work students are technically competent to address disaster risk management based solely on their social work knowledge.

The perception might ignore the complex disaster risk management, techniques, concepts and terminology, and systems that must be undoubtedly understood. Although social workers are capable of assessing individuals, groups or communities for disaster relief assistance, the methodologies that are engaged for disaster risk reduction differ. Therefore, social workers without appropriate training and knowledge are handicapped in their approach. Beauchesne (2007) defines comprehensive emergency management as an integrated programme that includes a number of elements from hazard assessment and resource management to logistics, training, and finance.

The interface between social work education and disaster risk management is inevitable and there is an urgent need for action. Social workers in academia and practice have to define the parameters of practice to operationalize their influence in this field. Morales Bv & Sheafor (1995) identified disasters and disaster aid as an arena for social work practice. The founder of the crisis response organization, Eye of the Storm, states that while the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics mandates that

social workers deliver appropriate professional services in public emergencies, too many are unprepared.

Nevertheless, this does not deter helping professionals from impeding or paralyzing relief efforts, creating a situation which Mitchell describes as “helpers helping helpers rather than victims” (Robb, 2003). As change agents, social workers should have knowledge and skills to intervene in hazard identification and to implement disaster risk management measures at micro, mezzo, and macro level.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Role of Social Workers in Disaster Management

According to National Governors' Association, USA, (1979) Disasters are the defining events in a hazard cycle that commonly is characterized by its four temporal stages: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery Hazard mitigation involves actions taken before a disaster to decrease vulnerability, primarily through measures that reduce casualties and exposure to damage and disruption or that provide passive protection during disaster impact. Mitigation measures include land-use regulations that reduce hazard exposure and building codes and construction practices designed to ensure that structures resist the physical impacts created by hazards, such as wind, water, or seismic forces (ICMA, 008).

According to the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization UNDRO (1822) an experienced organization in disaster management, the present disaster situation has merged human Activities and physical phenomena. Therefore, UNDRO currently uses the term “complex disaster” to describe disaster situations.

According to UNISDR (2005), the United Nations declared the 1990s as the international decade for natural disaster reduction and in 1994 adopted the Yokohama strategy and plan of action for a safer world. The UN further resolved that all governments, Botswana included, should give more resources to preventing and reducing risk based on the five UN priorities for action. Thus, the role of governments, institutions, and professions, including social work should be to.

Harding (2007) states that disaster is usually associated with human suffering caused by natural events such as tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods while human created disasters stem from war, the use of sanctions, the conduct of repressive regimes, and economic and social policies. Social work is a profession that aims at helping individuals and families, groups.

2.2 Nature of study

The study will be done in a completely rural and unchanged natural environment. This paper is based on secondary data.

- **Data Collection:** Secondary data has been collected through available literature, books, magazines, newspapers, journals and internet, and the students undergraduate programme and completion of their studies. It is assumed that they have a sufficiently broad knowledge, theory, and skill base applicable to the profession and would offer a rich source of data in this regard.
- **Data Analysis:** The data was analyzed following the qualitative processes and procedures based on thematic concepts designed to assess the knowledge of participants on the subject matter.

3. RESULTS

Social work is a multi-dimensional profession that promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships, and the improvement and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Besides the barriers, inequities, and injustices that it addresses, it responds to crises and emergencies including disasters (International Federation of Social Work, 2000). Disasters are known for disrupting social functioning of individuals, families, and communities and to cause serious recovery challenges. Social work aims at enhancing or restoring capacity for social functioning, and as such, knowledge of disasters and risk reduction is fundamental.

3.1 Students' disaster related experience

The personal experience of disasters students, social worker should be knowledge of factors that makes their clients to suffer hardships as individuals, groups, and communities suffer from disasters. This can be associated with the lack of interest by students and the failure of the curriculum to deliberately expose them to disaster risk reduction.

3.2 Students' response to the stated disasters

The students reported that they responded to wild-land fires with the help of the community and other government departments and evacuated those who were affected. During wild land fire outbreaks, they called neighbors, parents, police, and fire fighters to help put out the fire, using water, and then made a fire break. Students that responded to floods reported that they relocated the survivors to areas which were not flooded, mobilized neighbors to provide food and, after evacuation; they dried out their property then moved on with life. Those who with experience of drought, reported that there was a backup of saved grains, bought cattle feeds, and relocated domestic animals.

3.3 Knowledge on disaster terminology / concepts

Disaster terminology is complex and needs to be unpacked for those who will intervene in related situations. Deliberate efforts of educators to introduce learners to the field are essential. Social workers are aware that intervention may result in harm if proper care is not taken during intervention. Egan (2010: 41) argues that "only those beliefs, values, and norms that you have made your own will make a difference your helping behavior". The author further argues that helpers should master the model of helping utilized by them through developing a basic problem-management and opportunity development framework and the skills that make it work (Egan, 2010: 42).

Although some participants had intimated that they had knowledge on disasters and related concepts, the study shows that they were not well versed in the subject matter. While 50% had shown that they had knowledge on disaster risk reduction, it was found that they were unable to define the concept. All the answers were more inclined to mitigation than the definition of DRR. The answers from the participants show that they have little or no understanding and appreciation of disaster terminology.

In addition, 50% had already indicated that they had no knowledge of the concept. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is defined by the United Nations as "reducing disaster risks (losses) through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, correct management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events" (IFRC, 2009: 2).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results show that social work students at third year bachelor degree level, have little knowledge on disasters, disaster concepts, literature, and related interventions. This is problematic because the social work professional expectation and the global approach to social problems include disaster risk reduction. It is apparent that the students do not know the Hyogo Framework of Action and have not been introduced to the framework while at the university for three academic years.

Furthermore, it is unfortunate that the realization of resilient and safe communities as envisioned by the United Nations will not be realized by 2015. Universities are supposed to lead in terms of educational development and graduating professionals with adequate skills to work with diverse populations and issues raised at various levels. In such an event, the UN disaster agenda will be compromised by inactive participation of stakeholders, in particular academic institutions.

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