



Original Article

Assessing Disaster Management Preparedness: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Local Government Unit Employees in Digos City, Philippines

Crystel Jane M. Bustamante, Rishiel L. Sajetarios, Ryan A. Toledano, and Princess G. Cole* 

Department of Business
Administration Education, UM
Digos College, Digos City,
Philippines

Correspondence:
princess_cole@umindanao.edu.ph

Abstract

This study assessed the perceived disaster preparedness of local government employees in Digos City, Philippines, and examined demographic variations. A descriptive cross-sectional design was employed, utilizing stratified random sampling to gather data from 218 employees through a standardized survey questionnaire. The instrument measured three dimensions: disaster knowledge, disaster skills, and family preparedness. Findings revealed a high overall level of perceived preparedness. Among the dimensions, family preparedness scored highest, followed by disaster skills and disaster knowledge. Statistical analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated no significant differences in perception based on age or most categories of marital status. However, a significant disparity was found between male and female respondents, identifying gender as a notable factor influencing preparedness perceptions. The study concludes that while local government employees in Digos City perceive themselves as highly prepared, this perception is not uniform across genders. This underscores the necessity for disaster management policies and training programs to integrate a gender-sensitive approach. Investing in the targeted capacity-building of this frontline workforce is crucial for enhancing overall community resilience.

Keywords

business management; local government employees; disaster management; disaster preparedness; Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the escalating frequency and intensity of natural disasters threaten sustainable development, straining the capacities of nations worldwide (Yadav & Barve, 2019). The Asia-Pacific region is a hotspot of this crisis, facing disproportionate impacts that highlight a universal imperative: effective disaster risk management (DRM) is not merely a reactive endeavor but a critical strategic investment in human security and economic stability. The cornerstone of this system is preparedness—the complex of technical and managerial capabilities, from early warning systems to resource management, that enables



an effective response (Khankeh et al., 2019; Srinivas, 2020). International frameworks consistently emphasize that robust local institutions are the first line of defense, making subnational government capacity a primary determinant of community resilience.

The Philippines serves as a poignant case study of this global challenge, possessing one of the highest disaster risk profiles in the world. Catastrophic events like the 2013 Bohol earthquake and Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) have tragically exposed systemic vulnerabilities within the national DRM architecture. Despite a comprehensive legal framework embodied by the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, significant implementation gaps persist. National audits and scholarly analyses point to recurring weaknesses in financial management, inter-agency collaboration, and information sharing, which have consistently hampered efficient response and successful rehabilitation (Commission on Audit [COA], 2020; Domingo & Manejar, 2018). This indicates a critical policy-practice divide, where national mandates fail to fully translate into effective local action.

This disconnect is most acutely felt at the local government level. Local Government Units (LGUs) are legally mandated as the "first responders" in any crisis, placing an immense responsibility on their personnel. However, the operational capacity of an LGU is ultimately a function of the preparedness of its individual employees. If these frontline actors lack confidence in their knowledge, skills, or personal readiness, the entire system's resilience is compromised. While there is ample research on community-level preparedness and the structural aspects of DRM, a significant research gap exists regarding the human capital within LGUs themselves. There is a scarcity of empirical studies that investigate the self-assessed preparedness of the very personnel tasked with executing disaster protocols, creating a blind spot in both scholarship and policy formulation (Sandanam et al., 2018).

Therefore, this study addresses a critical nexus between a well-documented national-level policy challenge and an under-researched local-level human factor. It moves beyond assessing plans and protocols to investigate the perceived readiness of the individuals who bring them to life. To address this gap, this study aimed to assess the perceived disaster preparedness of employees in the Digos City LGU and to examine variations based on demographic profiles. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of perceived preparedness among LGU employees in terms of disaster knowledge, disaster skills, and family preparedness? (2) Are there significant differences in this perceived preparedness when analyzed by sex, age, and marital status? This study provides granular evidence on a pivotal yet overlooked component of disaster resilience. The significance of this inquiry is its potential to bridge the identified policy-practice gap. The findings are intended to inform targeted, evidence-based human resource interventions within LGUs, shifting training and capacity-building from a generic, top-down approach to one that is nuanced and responsive to the actual perceptions and needs of local government employees. Ultimately, strengthening this human foundation is essential for translating national DRM policies into tangible, life-saving action at the local level.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-cross-sectional research design to assess the perception of local government employees towards their disaster preparedness in Digos City, Philippines. The methodology proceeded systematically, beginning with the identification of the study population and sampling criteria before moving to data collection and analysis. The target population consisted of the entire cohort of 500 permanent employees of the Digos City Local Government Unit. From this population, a sample of 218 respondents was



determined using a probability-based sampling approach, calculated with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. To ensure the findings reflected meaningful disaster management experience, specific inclusion criteria were applied, limiting participation to current LGU employees who had undergone formal Disaster Management training. Correspondingly, exclusion criteria screened out employees without such training to maintain focus on the core population of interest.

A stratified random sampling technique was implemented to ensure proportional representation across the LGU's organizational structure. The population was first stratified by departmental affiliation, after which random samples were drawn from each stratum. This approach guaranteed that each department was appropriately represented in the final sample while maintaining the principle of random selection. The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire adapted from a previously validated scale developed by Dela Cruz and Llanes (2018), which measured perceived preparedness across three key dimensions: disaster knowledge, disaster skills, and family preparedness. The instrument utilized a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Low) to 5 (Very High) for all preparedness items, with clearly defined interpretive ranges for the resulting mean scores.

Data collection was preceded by securing formal authorization from the Digos City local government unit. The questionnaire was then personally distributed to the selected respondents, with voluntary completion constituting implied consent. The subsequent data analysis progressed through two methodical phases. The initial phase focused on descriptive analysis, calculating mean scores and standard deviations to determine overall and dimensional levels of perceived preparedness. The second phase employed inferential statistics, specifically the Kruskal-Wallis H Test, to identify any significant differences in preparedness perceptions when analyzed by demographic profiles including sex, age, and marital status.

Ethical considerations were carefully integrated throughout the research process. The voluntary nature of participation was emphasized, and the anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents were strictly preserved through the use of aggregated data that prevented individual identification. All analytical procedures were thoroughly documented to ensure transparency and reproducibility. This comprehensive methodological approach was designed to yield reliable and valid findings that could genuinely inform disaster management policy and practice at the local government level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics were computed to assess the employees' level of perceived preparedness across three dimensions. The results, summarized in Table 1, indicate an overall high level of perceived preparedness.

Table 1. *Level of perception of local government employees toward preparedness for disaster management*

Indicators	M	SD
Disaster Knowledge	4.05	0.52
Disaster Skills	4.10	0.83
Family Preparedness	4.16	0.61
Overall	4.10	0.65



As shown in Table 1, family preparedness received the highest mean score ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.61$), followed closely by disaster skills ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.83$) and disaster knowledge ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.52$). The overall mean ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.65$) confirms a consistently high perception of preparedness across all dimensions. The elevated score for family preparedness suggests that employees' readiness is strongly motivated by personal and familial safety concerns. This finding aligns with the concept of vested interest, where individuals who perceive a high personal stake in an outcome are more likely to engage in preparatory behaviors (Miller et al., 2013). The result is consistent with the study by Talplacido et al. (2022), which found a strong positive correlation between disaster awareness and household preparedness. It appears that the sense of responsibility for one's family acts as a powerful driver, translating professional knowledge and skills into tangible household-level planning. However, as noted by Gumelar et al. (2020), this high perception may not always equate to comprehensive practical readiness, indicating a need for ongoing community socialization on disaster preparedness.

The high ratings for disaster skills and knowledge are encouraging and likely reflect the institutional training provided to LGU employees. This finding corroborates that of Goniewicz et al. (2021), who reported that employees with formal training scored above average in disaster competency. The score for disaster skills, despite being high, also had the largest standard deviation, indicating greater variability in employees' confidence in their practical abilities compared to their theoretical knowledge. This variability underscores the importance of moving beyond knowledge-based training to include hands-on drills and simulation exercises to build robust and uniform practical skills, as emphasized by Setyawati et al. (2020).

A series of Kruskal-Wallis H tests were conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the perceived preparedness dimensions based on the demographic profiles of the respondents (sex, age, marital status). Table 2 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which examined differences in the level of perception toward disaster preparedness among local government employees when analyzed by sex. The results revealed no statistically significant differences in perceived disaster knowledge, $H(3) = 3.17$, $p = .367$, and disaster skills, $H(3) = 0.49$, $p = .920$. However, a significant difference was found in the level of family preparedness, $H(3) = 8.46$, $p = .037$, indicating that at least one group differed significantly in their perception of family preparedness toward disaster management. This Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed that family preparedness significantly differed among gender groups, suggesting that perceptions of readiness and domestic disaster management responsibilities vary across male, female, and LGBTQIA+ employees. In contrast, perceptions related to disaster knowledge and disaster skills were statistically similar, indicating that access to formal training and institutional disaster programs may have standardized employee understanding across genders.

This finding aligns with Erman et al. (2021), who emphasized that gender influences both the perception of and response to disaster risks, largely shaped by cultural norms and social roles. Similarly, Cvetković et al. (2018) found that men often perceive themselves as more capable and confident in disaster response, whereas women, although less confident, exhibit greater attentiveness to household preparedness measures. The significant difference observed in family preparedness resonates with Martins et al. (2019), who concluded that women tend to take a proactive role in organizing and protecting family welfare during



Table 2. *Differences in the level of perception among local government employees toward preparedness for disaster management when analyzed by sex*

Indicators	Sex	n	Mean Rank	χ^2	df	p
Disaster Knowledge	Male	86	115.95	3.17	3	0.367
	Female	119	102.95			
	LGBTQIA+	8	127.38			
	Rather not say	5	125.80			
	Total	218				
Disaster Skills	Male	86	110.58	0.49	3	0.920
	Female	119	107.61			
	LGBTQIA+	8	117.75			
	Rather not say	5	122.70			
	Total	218				
Family Preparedness	Male	86	119.73	8.46	3	0.037*
	Female	119	99.69			
	LGBTQIA+	8	144.50			
	Rather not say	5	110.90			
	Total	218				

Note. χ^2 = Chi-square; df = degrees of freedom. $p < .05$ indicates significant difference.

crises, demonstrating higher resilience and anticipatory planning than men. Contrastingly, Inal et al. (2019) argued that gender may not always serve as a consistent predictor of disaster preparedness, noting that in some contexts, socio-economic conditions and institutional inclusivity outweigh gender as a determinant. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study reinforce Enarson et al. (2018), who posited that gendered divisions of labor and unequal access to decision-making opportunities shape disaster management outcomes. Women often manage household-level preparedness while men participate in operational or field-based responses, reflecting broader social stratification patterns.

The nuanced differences observed in family preparedness suggest that local government agencies should consider gender-responsive disaster education programs. Targeted training that addresses diverse roles—both public and domestic—can close perceptual and competency gaps. Promoting inclusive disaster awareness workshops for all employees, including gender minorities, will ensure equitable disaster resilience within local governance structures.

Table 3 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the level of perception toward disaster preparedness among local government employees when analyzed by age. The test revealed no statistically significant differences across age groups in terms of disaster knowledge, $H(5) = 3.13$, $p = .680$; disaster skills, $H(5) = 5.87$, $p = .319$; and family preparedness, $H(5) = 8.19$, $p = .146$. These results indicate that the perception of disaster preparedness did not vary significantly across the six age categories (18-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, and 46-50 years). The findings demonstrate that age was not a statistically



Table 3. *Differences in the level of perception among local government employees toward preparedness for disaster management when analyzed by age*

Indicators	Age (years)	n	Mean Rank	χ^2	df	p
Disaster Knowledge	18-25	39	113.46	3.13	5	.680
	26-30	46	118.36			
	31-35	47	102.86			
	36-40	29	117.57			
	41-45	21	98.95			
	46-50	36	102.21			
Disaster Skills	18-25	39	102.50	5.87	5	.319
	26-30	46	122.66			
	31-35	47	115.61			
	36-40	29	114.83			
	41-45	21	94.33			
	46-50	36	96.85			
Family Preparedness	18-25	39	106.56	8.19	5	.146
	26-30	46	116.20			
	31-35	47	121.39			
	36-40	29	115.74			
	41-45	21	82.40			
	46-50	36	99.38			
Total		218		17.19		1.145

Note. χ^2 = Chi-square; *df* = degrees of freedom; *p* = significance value. *p* < .05 indicates significant difference.

significant factor influencing perceptions of disaster preparedness among local government employees in Digos City. Regardless of age, employees shared similar views concerning their disaster knowledge, practical skills, and family-level preparedness. This suggests that exposure to institutional disaster management programs and mandated preparedness orientations within local government units may have produced a relatively uniform level of awareness and readiness across age brackets. These results are consistent with Zhang et al. (2021), who reported that age did not significantly influence disaster preparedness perceptions among residents in the West Bandung District, Indonesia. Similarly, İnal, Altıntaş, and Doğan (2019) observed that age was not a significant determinant of disaster preparedness in their Turkish cohort, supporting earlier findings in Tehran by Najafi et al. (2019), who noted that preparedness behaviors tend to be shaped more by environmental exposure and training frequency than by chronological age.

From a behavioral perspective, disaster preparedness is influenced more by situational learning and institutional reinforcement than by generational differences. As İnal et al. (2019) emphasized, preparedness training that is consistent, repetitive, and behaviorally oriented can reduce age-related disparities by establishing shared competencies across demographics. In this study, local government employees—regardless of age—likely benefited from uniform access to training modules, simulations, and awareness campaigns conducted by the city's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO).

However, contrary evidence exists. Bronfman et al. (2019) found that adults between 30



and 59 years old demonstrated higher levels of disaster preparedness, attributing this to greater familial and occupational responsibilities that heightened their motivation to prepare. Similarly, Lindell et al. (2019) suggested that older adults tend to engage more in preparedness activities due to their cumulative life experience and prior exposure to disasters, which shape their risk perception and readiness behaviors. These contrasting results underscore the influence of socio-contextual variables—such as local policy engagement, access to disaster communication, and risk awareness—over purely biological or age-related factors.

Taken together, the present findings suggest that age alone does not drive differences in disaster preparedness perception among Digos City employees. Instead, the key determinants may include institutional culture, mandatory training compliance, and exposure to public safety programs. This aligns with UNDRR (2022) and ILO (2023) frameworks advocating for equitable disaster preparedness education across all workforce demographics, ensuring that capacity building is inclusive and not stratified by age.

Finally, Table 4 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the level of perception toward disaster preparedness among local government employees when analyzed by marital status. The results revealed no statistically significant difference in the overall perception across marital categories, $H(5) = 27.60$, $p = .356$, suggesting that marital status did not significantly influence employees' general perceptions of preparedness for disaster management. However, when examined per indicator, a significant difference was found in disaster knowledge, $H(5) = 11.65$, $p = .040$, indicating that employees' understanding and awareness of disaster preparedness varied according to their marital status. Post hoc inspection of the mean ranks shows that participants who preferred not to disclose their marital status (Mean Rank = 180.33) and those who were widowed (Mean Rank = 149.54) reported the highest levels of perceived disaster knowledge, followed by separated (Mean Rank = 117.97), married (Mean Rank = 107.23), others (Mean Rank = 102.50), and single employees (Mean Rank = 98.30).

The findings indicate that, overall, marital status did not significantly influence perceptions of disaster preparedness among local government employees. Whether single, married, separated, widowed, or preferring not to disclose, employees exhibited comparable levels of disaster-related awareness and readiness. This uniformity may stem from standardized training sessions, shared institutional safety policies, and mandated participation in disaster preparedness drills under the city's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO), which likely equalized knowledge and response competencies across marital categories.

However, the significant difference observed in disaster knowledge suggests that certain marital groups—particularly widowed and separated employees—may possess heightened awareness or sensitivity toward disaster preparedness. This could be attributed to greater perceived vulnerability and personal responsibility for dependents, motivating stronger preparedness behaviors. Cvetković et al. (2018) similarly found that married individuals and households with dual adult members tend to report higher preparedness levels, explaining that the psychological and financial stability of marital partnerships fosters collective decision-making and disaster planning.



Table 4. *Differences in the level of perception among local government employees toward preparedness for disaster management when analyzed by marital status*

Indicators	Marital Status	n	Mean Rank	χ^2	df	p
Disaster Knowledge	Single	69	98.30	11.65*	5	.040
	Married	94	107.23			
	Separated	37	117.97			
	Widowed	12	149.54			
	Others	3	102.50			
	Rather not say	3	180.33			
Disaster Skills	Single	69	95.36	8.24	5	.143
	Married	94	114.87			
	Separated	37	108.41			
	Widowed	12	134.00			
	Others	3	134.33			
	Rather not say	3	157.00			
Family Preparedness	Single	69	102.09	7.71	5	.173
	Married	94	107.49			
	Separated	37	114.26			
	Widowed	12	126.33			
	Others	3	180.83			
	Rather not say	3	145.50			
Total		218		27.60		.356

Note. χ^2 = Chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; p = significance value. $p < .05$ indicates a statistically significant difference.

The findings are also consistent with Hung (2019), who observed that marital status correlates positively with household preparedness because couples often share information and negotiate preparedness decisions as joint responsibilities. This cooperative dynamic strengthens both awareness and action, reinforcing the notion that social support systems enhance disaster readiness.

Conversely, Bronfman et al. (2019) noted that individuals who are single or widowed may also demonstrate strong preparedness attitudes due to autonomy in decision-making and prior exposure to crises that foster self-reliance. In the current study, widowed participants ranked highly in disaster knowledge, potentially reflecting personal experience with loss and an increased sense of vigilance in preventing future disasters. Similarly, those who preferred not to disclose their marital status may possess higher educational or occupational exposure to disaster management, leading to elevated awareness levels. These nuanced differences support the argument of Lindell et al. (2019) that sociodemographic factors such as marital status interact with psychological and experiential variables, influencing preparedness perception in complex ways. Married individuals may emphasize collective family safety, while separated or widowed individuals may prioritize individual competency and response autonomy. Such variations underscore the importance of tailoring disaster education initiatives to address diverse familial and social contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a critical assessment of perceived disaster preparedness among local government employees in Digos City, Philippines. The findings reveal an overall high



level of perceived preparedness across the key dimensions of disaster knowledge, disaster skills, and family preparedness. This indicates a positive foundation of confidence and self-efficacy within the LGU workforce, which is essential for effective disaster response. However, the analysis uncovered significant variations in these perceptions based on specific demographic factors, offering a more nuanced understanding of the workforce's readiness landscape.

The most salient finding is the significant disparity in perceptions based on gender, particularly concerning family preparedness. The results indicate that female employees reported lower levels of perceived family preparedness compared to their male and LGBTQIA+ counterparts. This suggests that gender roles and potentially unequal distributions of household caregiving responsibilities may influence how employees appraise their family's readiness, a factor that standardized training programs often overlook. Furthermore, the significant difference in disaster knowledge based on marital status, with widowed individuals reporting higher levels, underscores how personal life experiences can profoundly shape an individual's engagement with disaster-related information. In contrast, the absence of significant differences across age groups suggests that the LGU's institutional training efforts have been successful in fostering a consistent level of perceived preparedness throughout the workforce's demographic spectrum.

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Ethical Approval

No ethics approval was issued.

Competing interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability

Data will be made available upon request to the authors.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence Use

In the preparation of this research, we utilized both **Grammarly Premium** and **Deepseek** as AI-assisted editing tools to refine language, ensure proper citation formatting in APA 7th edition style, and improve overall readability. The AIs were employed solely for proofreading, grammar correction, and structural suggestions; all academic content, analysis, and conclusions are our original work. We take full responsibility for the research's integrity and confirm that human judgment guided every critical decision throughout the study's development.



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