

Empowering the youth in times of crisis: Analyzing crisis-related activities among the youth of Muntinlupa City, Philippines during typhoons

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Abstract

This study attempts to analyze the crisis-related activities among the youth of Muntinlupa City as the basis for a crisis communication management plan which is imperative to minimize the typhoon's impact. The researchers selected six youth representatives from different parts of Muntinlupa City to participate in the conduct of a focused-group discussion. Several themes have emerged before, during and after the typhoon based on their experiences and perspectives of crisis-related activities in the City. For instance, information dissemination on typhoon preparedness, coordination with different local agencies and behavior change communication strategies are the crisis-related activities before the typhoon. Meanwhile, close monitoring of evacuees with the help of local agencies, roving of barangay emergency response team, distribution of relief goods and hot meals, regular information dissemination, provision of informal learning to children and provision of breastfeeding stations are among the crisis-related activities during the typhoon.

On the other hand, the crisis-related activities after the typhoon include assessment of devastated areas giving assistance, seeking psychological help, coordination with the health center and post-typhoon information dissemination. These crisis-related activities are good indicators that the youth involvement and participation in Muntinlupa City are active to ensure the safety of their communities during the disaster.

Keywords. Youth, typhoon, crisis-related activities, communication crisis management, Philippines.

Introduction

A typhoon is a natural calamity that generally impacts human beings. According to Devaney⁵, it has spiraling winds that are extremely powerful and have a diameter of several hundred kilometers or miles. This causes harm to human existence including their means of subsistence, in both the short and long term. However, effective communication should always be present. According to Fearn-Banks⁸, it is essential to consider how the organization interacts with the public when developing tactics and strategies to lessen the

harm to the organization's image before, during and after the adverse event. In addition, Seeger and Ulmer²² highlighted that the goals of interaction among stakeholders are the risks of crisis, cause, blame, responsibility, precautionary norms and crisis-induced changes in the organization and relationship to stakeholders. In the three phases of a situation—before, during and after the typhoon—crisis communication, or engagement among concerned sectors is crucial for reducing or eliminating crisis repercussions.

Youth are also the most proactive in providing safe communities throughout the epidemic and can best come up with coping mechanisms, according to UNESCO¹⁵. This suggests that youth is one of the key players in resolving the significant problems brought by the natural calamities^{19,21} particularly during a pandemic.

According to the facts provided, typhoons frequently cause catastrophes. Crisis communication must be conducted before, during and after the typhoon to minimize its effects. Additionally, young people are the most vital participants in a pandemic. To address these issues, stakeholders should frequently communicate typhoon crises with youth involvement before, during and after.

Given its geographic location in the "Pacific Ring of Fire" and the Pacific typhoon belt, the Philippines is vulnerable to typhoons that cause various damages, according to the Asian Disaster Reduction Center¹. Yolanda, a typhoon that hit the Philippines in 2013, claimed 6,300 lives and caused 89.6 billion pesos worth of damage²⁵. This was predicated on the idea that typhoon-induced calamity had a lasting effect on the Filipino people.

In addition, the Department of Interior and Local Government⁶ recognized the critical position played by the youth sector in disaster preparedness. However, the majority of young people took part in offering potential assistance to the impacted community in the study of Evardone⁷, despite the severe security concerns after Typhoon Haiyan. Furthermore, according to Reilly¹⁸, three (3) days after Typhoon Haiyan, students still wearing their uniforms gathered relief supplies and set up a distribution center at Manila Airport.

Thus, young Filipinos actively participated before, during and after the typhoon. Hence, Filipino youth play integral roles in typhoon crisis communication and their efforts to assist the affected citizens before, during and after the typhoon are meritorious.

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Various issues are faced amid heavy rains and strong winds in the National Capital Region's City of Muntinlupa. Numerous citizens of the city who lived near Laguna de Bay and other flood-prone areas had to leave. During Typhoon Quinta, the Muntinlupa City Department of Disaster Resilience and Management¹³ counted 259 families, or at least 1,030 people, in different evacuation facilities. Similarly, 1,018 families were evacuated during Typhoon Ulysses¹¹.

Furthermore, the city has made several precautions and innovations to end the typhoon issue, like the State-of-the-Art Disaster Resilience Mobile Learning Hub, which aims to increase community resilience and people's preparedness for disasters. According to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank², the city is also a part of the Metro Manila Flood Management Project.

Therefore, the city of Muntinlupa has crisis management-related activities before, during and after the typhoon. However, since the local government is responsible for communicating typhoon crisis management-related activities to the stakeholders, the city of Muntinlupa should also design a crisis communication that involves the youth.

As stated by Fernandez and Shaw⁹, everyone should be concerned about DRR since disasters can affect anyone including youth. Based on the study of Pfefferbaum et al¹⁶, the involvement of youth has several advantages to the communities. While looking for their role in society, youth need the opportunity to participate in valuable activities. In Indonesia, the extent of youth participation in the management of flood crisis is significantly impacted by their personal exposure to flooding from both rob and overflowing river water¹².

According to Pfefferbaum, Pfefferbaum et al¹⁶, children are great resources to develop and activate for disaster preparedness, response, recovery and resilience at the individual, family and community levels because they may contribute to disaster risk reduction initiatives. Their involvement in disaster risk reduction has the potential to help them personally through improved interpersonal relationships, self-efficacy and personal development, as well as communities through increased social networks and disaster preparedness.

Thus, this study attempts to analyze the crisis-related activities among the youth of Muntinlupa City, Philippines, which is imperative to minimize the typhoon's impact and will serve as a basis for a crisis communication management plan for the city.

Material and Methods

The study is qualitative, allowing researchers to collect specific information about people's beliefs and motivation¹⁷. The study is also descriptive, seeking to outline the traits of the phenomenon under investigation. In light of these, this

study revealed perceptions of typhoon crisis-related activities among youth in Muntinlupa city.

By employing the purposive sampling technique, the researchers selected the informants through the following criteria: first, the informant is a resident among the six (6) flood-prone barangays in Muntinlupa City, as reported by the Muntinlupa Public Information Office, namely Barangay Buli, Barangay Poblacion, Barangay Bayanan, Barangay Sucat, Barangay Cupang and Barangay Putatan; secondly, the information is considered youth or person aged between 15 to 24²³ and lastly, the informant is active in terms of participation in crisis management-related activities during typhoon.

The participants who took part in this study are: (1) Pearl, 19 from Barangay Buli, (2) Anna, 21 from Barangay Poblacion, (3) Karl, 22 from Barangay Bayanan, (4) Vlad, 22 from Barangay Sucat, (5) Cairo, 21 from Barangay Cupang and (6) Judit, 24 from Barangay Putatan. The information is accurate except for their names to protect their identities.

To obtain data for this study, focused-group discussion was facilitated. In this data gathering method, researcher assembles a group of individuals to discuss a specific topic based on their personal experiences and how they understand things relevant to the topic through a moderated interaction¹⁴.

Using this method, the researchers are able to generate information based on informants' experiences and understandings on typhoon-crisis related activities.

The researcher facilitated a focused-group discussion to collect data for this study. According to Nyumba et al¹⁴, through a moderated interaction, the participants discussed a particular issue based on their individual experiences and how they perceived things pertinent to the topic. The researchers gathered data using this strategy based on informants' experiences and perspectives of typhoon-related activities.

A discussion guide was created and utilized for the data gathering. The researchers arranged the discussion points following the research problems to organize the information. Since the questions are open-ended, informants could respond freely and the moderators and other informants accommodated follow-up questions. The researchers clearly explained the study's goal and asked for the participants' consent to record the discussion using an audio recorder.

Results and Discussion

The researchers studied the data to find common themes that would broaden the discourse on the typhoon-related youth activities in Muntinlupa city to build a crisis communication management plan, which is vital to minimizing the typhoon's implications. It is divided into three parts focusing on crisis-related activities before, during and after the typhoon.

Crisis-Related Activities before the Typhoon-Information Dissemination on Typhoon Preparedness:

Activities under this sub-category are announcement through community visit, social media updates, utilization of existing community-based broadcast media, production of print media and provision of signage.

1. Announcement through Community Visitation: Anna, Karl, Vlad and Cairo regularly conduct announcements through community visitation for different purposes. Community visit is done through the help of the Barangay by providing the official vehicle to announce the coming typhoon. For Anna and Cairo, it intends to remind the residents to make necessary preparations for the natural calamity. At the same time, both Karl and Vlad conducted an initial assessment if evacuation is needed for the residents.

Likewise, community visit is an opportunity for Anna to inform the authority and other residents, especially those with senior citizens and persons with disabilities in the family, about possible situations that may arise if they decide not to evacuate. However, the purpose of home visit for Vlad is for early evacuation. Vlad coordinates with community officials about the identified families with infants and pregnant mothers that need to evacuate before the typhoon.

2. Social Media Updates: Pearl, Anna, Karl and Vlad use their social media accounts or pages to update information. For Pearl and Karl, social media is used regularly for announcements based on the news broadcasted in traditional media about the typhoon. Meanwhile, Anna stated that their information campaign is done through social media. Aside from typhoons, they also disseminate information on earthquakes, fire and other disasters. Moreover, Vlad explained that they regularly update the Barangay's social media account and there are persons in charge of managing typhoon-related information.

3. Utilization of Existing Community based Broadcast Media: After the coordination meeting of the Barangay officials with other sectors on typhoon preparedness, the emergency response teams are immediately activated and disseminate information through existing community-based broadcast media. Community-based radio is available in Barangay where Anna resides while in the Barangay, where Vlad lives, community-based television is present. Both Anna and Vlad actively relay accurate typhoon-related information to the one who manages the mentioned community-based broadcast media.

4. Production of Print Media: Anna and Judit are engaged in producing Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials in print format to increase residents' awareness and knowledge levels. Anna has its leaflets on the Do's and Don'ts during a typhoon. In contrast, for Judit, dissemination of their printed leaflets distributed within their

Barangay is part of their crisis and disaster communication campaign.

5. Provision of Signage: Judit claims that there is a provision of signage in flood-prone locations. This alerts the locals that the area is unsafe, significantly when the water level in Laguna de Bay is increasing. According to Ryan et al²⁰, any level of information campaign will be successful provided its message is focused on a specific risk that affects the host community. Therefore, interaction appears valuable for enhancing knowledge, reducing risk and boosting preparedness activity in a particular community. Still, most of the strategies under consideration might better use benchmarking, planning and implementation.

Youth understand the value of innovative and imaginative platforms encouraging community participation in DRR and open access to information. According to Cumiskey et al⁴, people who live in rural locations without access to the internet or mobile phones, require special consideration. While investing in cutting-edge technologies and utilizing those that are locally suitable, youth active in DRR must maintain links to offline media to guarantee that no members of their communities are excluded.

Coordination with Different Local Agencies

1. Coordination meeting to Brainstorm: To address the typhoon-related crisis, Karl, Vlad, Cairo, Anna, Judit and the other barangay leaders participated in a brainstorming session. The experiences of their local barangays during previous typhoons are assessed to develop strategies to minimize possible undesirable scenarios. Karl lives in Barangay Bayanan, which has a Barangay Emergency Response Team (BERT). In contrast, Vlad and Cairo reside in Barangay Sucat and are actively involved in their respective Barangay Disaster Risk and Reduction Management (BRRM) organizations. These Barangay teams were tasked with determining what was the best to do during the typhoon.

Vlad made it clear that one of his responsibilities for the BRRM is to build task forces for various calamities such as drought, typhoons, floods and the like, even if there is no news or information to indicate that one is imminent. Meanwhile, Cairo emphasized his BRRM's duty to coordinate with the rescue efforts of any potential evacuees even before the typhoon.

As part of the duties of either BERT or BRRM, Anna conducts community risk assessments in the impacted areas. Other than that, the coordination meetings for Judit intends to combine various organizations' contributions to strategize things like preparation for evacuation and the like.

2. Coordination with the Health Sector: Pearl, Vlad and Judit generally explained that their health response team also assists the Barangay officials in coordinating with the Health

Centers to know to request their presence during the typhoon. According to Karl, the Head of Disaster Management coordinates with the Health Center to provide breastfeeding rooms for mothers with infants. This is being done as there are already weather forecasts for an incoming typhoon.

Meanwhile, Cairo emphasized that he is being involved in the coordination with the health center for an on-call physician to address health-related concerns, like first aid, that may arise in the evacuation center during the typhoon. These cases explained that coordination with the health sector is part of the disaster preparedness of Barangay Buli, Barangay Bayanan, Barangay Sucat, Barangay Cupang and Barangay Putatan where Pearl, Karl, Vlad, Cairo and Judit reside.

3. Coordination with School Administrators for Evacuation: Cairo assists his Barangay officials in coordinating with the public school Principals before the typhoon to use their classrooms and covered courts as evacuation centers for the affected residents.

Fernandez and Shaw¹⁰ claimed that through science clubs, young people can establish connections between their school, family and community and help disseminate information about disaster prevention, preparedness and response that they have learnt both within and outside the classroom.

4. Coordination with the Private Sectors: Karl shared his experiences that as the typhoon was coming, he coordinated with the private establishments to fix their billboards because these may affect the residents.

Behavior Change Communication Strategies

1. Risks and Disaster-Related Enhancement Program for the Rescuers: Members of BERTs in Barangay Buli and Pearl, Judit and Karl, who are members of their respective BERTs in Barangay Buli and Barangay Putatan and BRRM trainees in Barangay Bayanan, respectively, received instruction on how to rescue people during the crisis properly. The rescuers in Barangay Buli including Pearl received the necessary training. BERT is carried out once a month in the instance of Barangay Putatan. The City Disaster Office, Philippine Red Cross and Metro Manila Development Authority run this program.

Children and youth have traditionally been portrayed in the context of disasters in a one-dimensional manner as a group that is susceptible and is in need of protection rather than as change agents in their communities and stakeholders in creating and implementing pertinent policies and practices.

The ability and right of kids to contribute to disaster risk reduction and the resilience of their peers, families and communities have only recently come to light. As the first

digitally native generation, adolescents today are equipped with extraordinary technology acumen, an entrepreneurial mindset and confidence in their power to alter the world³.

By providing opportunities to eager youth in the community and equipping them with the necessary skills to match their abilities and capabilities, volunteer groups and services can considerably expand their capacity. They play a critical role in disaster response as intergenerational actors and in ensuring the readiness of their organizations, families and communities.⁴

2. Conduct of Fora, Seminars, Demonstration and Drills: The people of Barangay Poblacion and Barangay Putatan participate in various events such as forums, disaster-related lectures and fire and earthquake simulations, to improve their disaster communication practices. Anna and Judit are always tasked as working committee members of these activities in their respective Barangay.

According to Walia²⁴, numerous nations and organizations have created models of community-based disaster risk reduction due to the realization of the necessity to invest in community-based disaster preparedness. Several collaborations between governmental, non-governmental, academic institutions and bilateral and international organizations are formed throughout the creation, planning and execution of programs with a specific focus on enhancing a community's capacities.

Crisis-Related Activities during The Typhoon- Close Monitoring of Evacuees with the Help of Local Agencies: Vlad from Barangay Sucat said that during the typhoon, there is always a close observation of their evacuees. Additionally, this was seen in various barangays in the city.

Vlad, Judit and Pearl all said that they are being supported by their barangay partner local agencies throughout the typhoon.

Meanwhile, Pearl and Judit revealed that they make sure their barangay's medical professionals are available to the evacuees during typhoons so they can manage medical issues like providing first aid. Vlad, however, revealed that local police officers had been dispatched to the area to keep things calm and orderly during the typhoon.

Karl and Judit also claimed that Barangay Putatan and Barangay Bayanan have the official vehicles ready for usage in emergency and rescue situations.

According to Cumiskey et al⁴, to be ready for the next emergency, even minor ones should be treated seriously and learned from. Community volunteers frequently organize to lessen the effects of disaster, protect lives and limit financial losses. Youth recognize the importance of safeguarding our neighborhoods and fostering a climate of safety and security before and after disasters.

Roving of Barangay Emergency Response Team

1. To ensure the safety of the residents: To safeguard the safety of the locals, Pearl helps Barangay Buli's BERT rove the areas during the typhoon. On the other hand, Karl revealed that during the preventative evacuation of the affected residents, the safety of the rescuers was also emphasized. When engaging in DRR activities with the youth, safety must be taken into consideration. It is crucial to create programs that aim at the young population and address their unique needs while defining their position in DRR because youth do not perform at the same levels as adults⁹.

2. To force evacuate the affected residents: A forced evacuation is advised in some cases such as in Barangay Bayanan and Barangay Cupang. Some residents prefer to stay, so they can protect their property. When inhabitants of flood-prone areas chose to remain in their homes, Karl claimed that they plan to coordinate with the Philippine National Police. The residents will be compelled to leave under this plan.

3. To negotiate to those who do not want to be evacuated: Although a precautionary evacuation is scheduled, Karl noted that some residents did not want to leave. Karl is one of the helpers in this picture, urging the impacted locals to flee.

4. Distribution of Relief Goods and hot meals: During the typhoon, the Local Government's Social Services Department started providing emergency supplies to the evacuees. The majority of young volunteers, according to Pearl, are entrusted with distributing hot meals and humanitarian aid. Judit further disclosed that youth in Barangay Putatan actively participate in receiving assistance from non-governmental organizations to be given to evacuees and other locals.

Regular Information Dissemination: Despite juggling multiple duties, Vlad stated that he keeps the locals informed by contributing to their Barangay's official social media accounts and radio station.

Provision of informal learning to children: Judit claimed that the Sangguniang Kabataan lectures to the kids during the typhoon. Children are allowed to learn in the dedicated Childrens' corner.

Provision of breastfeeding station: Judit also mentioned that nursing stations are available for mothers of infants. To ensure the safety of their infants, particular care must be given to those women.

Crisis-Related Activities after The Typhoon

Assessment of Devasted Areas: According to Pearl, the Barangay officials conducted assessments of the typhoon-

affected areas with the help of young representatives. Following that, a meeting should be organized so that people can contribute ideas to their Barangay's disaster preparedness.

Pearl, Vlad and Judit noted that before informing the evacuees that they can return to their homes, they work with other youth representatives to help Barangay officials visit the impacted areas. Vlad and Judit mentioned that their barangay authorities work closely with the community's electricity provider, particularly since typhoons frequently damage electrical cables, leading to malfunction.

Giving Assistance: As indicated by Karl and Vlad, as part of their help to the Barangay officials, they continue to work with the City's Social Services Department. This is a component of the actions of the relief effort.

Seek Psychological Help: Pearl stated that they directed people to the Barangay's Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) Desk to provide psychosocial support. On the other hand, Karl worked alongside the Red Cross as a partner to ensure people's mental health.

Coordination with the Health Center: During typhoon season, Karl works closely with the health center and is a volunteer to help locals who require medical assistance, especially those who live in flood-prone or inundated areas. He said that leptospirosis is a widespread issue that the health center is addressing. The residents are then offered a variety of health-related lectures.

Post-Typhoon Information Dissemination: According to Pearl, regular informational reminders about what to do should continue even after the typhoon. This aims to prepare the locals for impending disasters like typhoons.

Conclusion

Provided that the goal of this study is to examine the typhoon-related activities among youth in the City of Muntinlupa, the following findings can be drawn:

Regarding typhoon-related activities, youth take the lead in spreading knowledge about typhoon preparedness through community outreach, social media, community-based broadcast media, print media and signage. This indicates that young people are adept at using various communication tools to alert city inhabitants about the impending typhoon which is crucial for reducing the disaster.

However, youth also supported barangay officials as they work with other stakeholders to develop ideas for solutions to typhoon-related problems. Stakeholders include the barangay health sector, which is anticipated to be on hand to treat people's medical needs during the typhoon, school officials, who are expected to make their classrooms available for possible evacuation and the private sectors who may be able to assist.

The youth also participate in the communication efforts aimed at behavior change. These included helping organize risks and disaster-related enhancement programs, fora, seminars, demonstrations and drills for the rescuers as a working committee member.

During the typhoon, close monitoring of the evacuees is done with the coordination of the youth to the health professionals for access to medicine in case needed and police officers that will keep peace and order in the evacuation centers. In addition, young people help with disaster and rescue operations alongside other volunteers who travel around the impacted areas in the Barangay's official vehicle.

The response team with the youth volunteers of the barangay is also present to safeguard the residents' security and assist others during evacuation. Youth also help deliver hot meals and relief goods from the business sector and non-governmental organizations in the evacuation centers. In addition, youth keep contributing through a variety of channels to the dissemination of information. Providing breastfeeding places for parents with young children and storytelling to children are some examples of youth-initiated informal learning.

Youth involvement is still seen in activities after the typhoon. The Barangay officials receive assistance from the youth in assessing the affected areas to provide suggestions for future action and enhance their disaster response. The youth even assist the Barangay in distributing aid to the distressed residents while carrying out this task. They also started initiatives to decrease the typhoon's impacts including requesting psychological assistance from the violence against women and children's desk and social worker offices, as well as coordinating with the health sector in light of potential illnesses residents could contract like leptospirosis.

These mentioned activities before, during and after the typhoon are indications that youth involvement and participation have indeed played notable roles in the typhoon-crisis communication of the City.

Recommendations

The study's findings show that youth in Muntinlupa actively participated in the typhoon-related crises. It is advised that the city considers standardizing the roles of youth including the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth organization mandated by law), not only before the typhoon but also during and after the typhoon.

The following crisis communication strategies could improve the typhoon-related activities among youth in the city:

1. Formalization of Communicating Typhoon Preparedness: Active involvement of youth in

communicating typhoon preparedness could be more effective if this is supported by the concerned units in the city such as the Muntinlupa City Public Information Office and Muntinlupa City Department of Disaster Resilience and Management.

Since various communication channels help to reach more audience within the city for accurate typhoon-related information, this could also lead to disseminate inaccurate information that might increase the typhoon crisis impacts. With that, the concerned units of the city must design guidelines to be followed by the youth sectors that will ensure that factual related information are being disseminated before, during and after the typhoon.

2. Standardization of Communicating with Stakeholders: If the city's relevant departments such as the Muntinlupa City Public Information Office and the Muntinlupa City Department of Disaster Resilience and Management, promote youth's active involvement in conveying typhoon preparedness, it may be more successful.

As the local government unit can reach more people in the city through various communication means for correct typhoon-related information, this could also result in the dissemination of false information, which could worsen the effects of the typhoon disaster. To ensure factual information is shared before, during and after the typhoon, the respective city entities must create guidelines for the youth sectors to follow.

3. Establishment of Partnership with Learning Institutions for Behavior Change Communication: In addition to assisting them in reducing the adverse effects of the typhoon disaster, partnerships with educational institutions could also inspire the youth. For instance, the National Service Training Program should provide instruction on typhoon readiness and medical students might assist in assuring the evacuees' physical well-being. Psychology departments of educational institutions could also conduct mental health seminars after the typhoon for the inhabitants' debriefing procedure.

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