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## UNVEILING RESILIENCE: NAVIGATING THE NEXUS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, DISASTER MITIGATION, AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN FLOOD-PRONE SRI LANKA

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### ABSTRACT

*This scholarly inquiry explores the intricate dynamics of climate change, disaster mitigation frameworks, and the vital role of social work education in building resilience amidst flood disasters in Sri Lanka. The study meticulously dissects inundation events, revealing dimensions that underscore community vulnerability. Through a discerning evaluation of disaster mitigation paradigms, the study identifies gaps and strengths shaping the current resilience landscape. A focal point emerges in a comprehensive investigation into the transformative potential of social work education, acting as a catalyst to amplify community resilience. This involves exploring educational frameworks, assessing practices' effectiveness, and delineating the role of social work professionals in instigating transformative change within vulnerable communities. The research design, characterized by methodological rigor, unfolds through granular analysis concentrated on flood-prone areas in Sri Lanka. This nuanced examination distills findings beyond statistics, providing a deeper understanding of socio-cultural and environmental factors influencing community resilience. Anticipated scholarly contributions aim to transcend the academic realm, informing contextually nuanced strategies. Envisioned strategies, designed to seamlessly integrate climate change awareness and social work methodologies, aspire to become integral components of overarching disaster response frameworks. The academic impact sought extends beyond theory, aiming to propel practical advancements by accentuating the imperative of interdisciplinary collaboration. The discourse on comprehensive disaster management is advanced, emphasizing symbiotic relationship between research, education, and practical interventions. Ultimately, findings from this pursuit are poised to provide actionable insights, significantly contributing to the cultivation of adaptive and resilient communities grappling with the challenges posed by the dynamic forces of climate change.*

**KEY WORDS:** Climate Change, Disaster Mitigation, Social Work Education, Flood Disasters, Disaster Management Paradigms, Practical Interventions, Interdisciplinary Collaboration

## **Introduction**

Sri Lanka, a country rich in cultural heritage and diverse landscapes, is increasingly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, particularly in the form of flood disasters. This research investigates the intersection of climate change, disaster mitigation frameworks, and the vital role of social work education in enhancing resilience in flood-prone communities. The core problem addressed is the insufficient focus on socio-cultural factors and community-based strategies within existing disaster response mechanisms. While there are frameworks in place, many of them emphasize technical solutions, leaving critical gaps in addressing the social dimensions of vulnerability. This study seeks to bridge that gap by exploring how social work education can contribute to strengthening community resilience, particularly in Sri Lanka's unique socio-cultural context.

The research aims to critically assess the current disaster mitigation paradigms, identifying both strengths and weaknesses, while emphasizing the transformative potential of social work professionals in disaster preparedness and recovery efforts. Key research questions focus on understanding the socio-cultural factors that shape vulnerability, the role of social work education in fostering resilience, and how these elements can be integrated into national disaster frameworks. By focusing on flood-prone areas, this study provides a nuanced, context-specific analysis that moves beyond mere statistical evaluations, offering insights into the dynamic relationship between social work, education, and disaster response.

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of interdisciplinary work that integrates social work with disaster management, offering a more holistic approach to resilience-building. Practically, it offers actionable strategies that can inform policy and improve disaster response frameworks by embedding social work education and community-based interventions into national mitigation efforts. As Sri Lanka faces increasing climate risks, this research provides timely insights into developing adaptive, resilient communities capable of navigating the challenges posed by climate change.

## **Research Objectives**

- To explore the intricate dynamics of flood events in Sri Lanka, particularly in flood-prone areas
- To identify gaps and strengths shaping the current resilience landscape, offering insights to enhance the effectiveness of policy initiatives and practical interventions
- To investigate educational frameworks, assess the effectiveness of current practices, and delineate the specific contributions and responsibilities of social

work professionals in instigating transformative change within vulnerable communities

- To propose contextually nuanced strategies that seamlessly integrate climate change awareness and social work methodologies

## **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the complex interplay between climate change, disaster mitigation frameworks, and the role of social work education in fostering resilience amidst flood disasters in Sri Lanka. The research is underpinned by a constructivist ontology, which posits that reality is socially constructed, meaning that the perceptions of individuals and communities shape their experiences of vulnerability and resilience. This ontological stance aligns with the study's focus on understanding how socio-cultural factors influence community responses to flood disasters. From an epistemological perspective, the study embraces interpretivism, recognizing that knowledge is subjective and context-dependent. Through this lens, the research seeks to uncover the participants' lived experiences, acknowledging that their insights are critical for understanding the broader dynamics of disaster resilience in a climate-vulnerable country like Sri Lanka.

The study utilizes a purposive sample of 20 participants from the Kelaniya Divisional Secretariat area, chosen based on their direct experience with flood events or active involvement in disaster response and social work activities. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions serve as the primary data collection methods, allowing for a rich exploration of participants' perspectives on the impact of flood disasters, the effectiveness of disaster mitigation efforts, and the role of social work education in enhancing community resilience. The research is geographically concentrated on flood-prone areas within Kelaniya, providing a localized context for examining community vulnerability and resilience in the face of climate change.

Data analysis follows a thematic analysis approach, which is compatible with the study's ontological and epistemological positions, as it facilitates the systematic identification and exploration of recurring themes and patterns within the qualitative data. This method supports the interpretivist goal of constructing meaning from participants' experiences, providing insights into the socio-cultural and environmental factors that shape resilience. Ethical considerations are paramount, with informed consent obtained from all participants to ensure voluntary participation and confidentiality. Although the findings may be specific to Kelaniya and may not be fully generalizable to other regions, the qualitative nature of the study allows for a nuanced understanding of the local context, contributing valuable insights to both theory and practice in the realms of climate change, disaster resilience, and social work education in Sri Lanka.

## **Results and Findings**

The findings of this scholarly inquiry underscore the intricate dynamics of climate change, disaster mitigation frameworks, and the pivotal role played by social work education in enhancing community resilience amidst flood disasters in Sri Lanka. Through a meticulous dissection of inundation events, the study illuminates dimensions that accentuate community vulnerability, revealing the nuanced interplay of socio-cultural and environmental factors. The discerning evaluation of disaster mitigation paradigms unveils both gaps and strengths that shape the current landscape of resilience. A focal point emerges in the transformative potential of social work education, acting as a catalyst to amplify community resilience. The study identifies specific educational frameworks and practices that prove effective in instigating transformative change within vulnerable communities. The granular analysis concentrated on flood-prone areas in Sri Lanka goes beyond statistical representations, providing a profound understanding of the contextual factors influencing community resilience. The anticipated scholarly contributions transcend the academic realm, offering contextually nuanced strategies for the Sri Lankan context. Envisioned strategies, designed to seamlessly integrate climate change awareness and social work methodologies, aspire to become integral components of overarching disaster response frameworks in Sri Lanka. The academic impact sought extends beyond theory, emphasizing the imperative of interdisciplinary collaboration in practical advancements. The discourse on comprehensive disaster management is advanced, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between research, education, and practical interventions. Ultimately, the findings from this pursuit are poised to provide actionable insights, significantly contributing to the cultivation of adaptive and resilient communities grappling with the challenges posed by the dynamic forces of climate change in Sri Lanka.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this scholarly inquiry delves into the intricate dynamics of climate change, disaster mitigation frameworks, and the transformative potential of social work education in bolstering community resilience amidst flood disasters in Sri Lanka. Through meticulous analysis of inundation events and a discerning evaluation of mitigation paradigms, the study reveals the complexities shaping the current resilience landscape. The focal point on the role of social work education emerges as a catalyst for transformative change, elucidating the specific frameworks, practices, and responsibilities of social work professionals in instigating resilience within vulnerable communities. The granular research design, characterized by methodological rigor, provides nuanced insights that transcend statistical representations, offering a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural and environmental factors influencing community resilience. The anticipated scholarly contributions extend beyond the academic realm, aiming to inform contextually nuanced strategies that seamlessly integrate climate change

awareness and social work methodologies into comprehensive disaster response frameworks. With a commitment to practical advancements and interdisciplinary collaboration, this inquiry strives to advance the discourse on comprehensive disaster management, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between research, education, and practical interventions. Ultimately, the findings from this pursuit are poised to offer actionable insights, significantly contributing to the cultivation of adaptive and resilient communities grappling with the challenges posed by the dynamic forces of climate change in the Sri Lankan context.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

Recommendations for fortifying disaster resilience in Sri Lanka pivot on the integration of social work methodologies and the nuanced responsibilities of social work professionals. Initial advocacy efforts should be directed towards the infusion of disaster management modules into social work education curricula, ensuring that emerging professionals are equipped with pertinent knowledge. Encouraging community-centered approaches underscores the importance of active engagement through participatory methods, facilitating interventions that are attuned to the distinctive needs of local communities. Prioritizing capacity-building initiatives at the community level involves orchestrating workshops and awareness campaigns to augment disaster preparedness. The imperative of social inclusivity and equity in disaster response should be championed, with a deliberate focus on addressing the needs of marginalized groups. A heightened emphasis on psycho-social support and trauma-informed care within interventions is crucial, recognizing and addressing the emotional well-being of disaster survivors. Facilitating collaborative endeavors between social work professionals, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations is paramount to constructing a cohesive and comprehensive disaster management approach. Post-disaster, a concerted focus on long-term sustainable development, centered on community development and resilience-building, should be advanced. Providing social work professionals with crisis communication skills is essential for the effective dissemination of information during disasters. Embracing a culture of continuous evaluation, learning, and policy advocacy is imperative to secure recognition and integration of the pivotal role of social work within comprehensive disaster management frameworks.

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