

THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS OF SRI LANKA ARMY REGARDING SEARCH AND RESCUE AS A RESPONSE TO DISASTERS

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SL Army has established Search and Rescue teams (SAR teams) in all 25 districts. The objective of the study was to describe the knowledge, attitudes and practices of SAR teams of the SL Army involved in search and rescue operations following disasters. A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out from October to December 2017. Five platoons each were selected randomly from high and medium risk district categories. All 5 platoons were selected from low risk category. The total sample size was 465. A pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was employed. The median age was 28 years. 3.2% were officers and 96.8% were soldiers, 80.4% educated up to G.C.E. O/L, 52.9% of the population had undergone SAR training during past three years in Sri Lanka and none had undergone training outside the country. Overall knowledge regarding search and rescue seem to be good, that is >75 percentage

score, 57.2%. 93.8% has desirable positive attitudes. 73.5% had participated in search and rescue operation as response to disasters. Overall practices seemed to be poor, that is <75 percentage score in 71.3% of the population. A statistically significant association was observed with level of education ($p= 0.001$), and designation ($p= 0.004$) and knowledge on search and rescue. Level of education, designation and SAR training had no significant association with attitudes on search and rescue. A statistically significant association was observed with designation ($p= 0.021$) and practices. Practices regarding search and rescue as response to disasters should be incorporated into the basic training programme for officers and soldiers.

Keywords: Disaster, Search, Rescue