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## The Role of DRRM Coordinators in Building Disaster-Ready Schools Sarangani Province, Philippines: An Appreciative Inquiry Approach

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This study explored the lived experiences, best practices, and aspirations of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Coordinators in Sarangani Province in building disaster-ready schools and fostering resilient communities amid frequent natural disasters. Guided by Appreciative Inquiry, the study sought to illuminate their contributions, resilience, and visions for sustainable disaster preparedness.

**Methodology:** Anchored on the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework, this qualitative research employed thematic analysis of narratives gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group. Participants were purposively selected DRRM Coordinators with at least three years of experience in high-risk schools across Sarangani Province. Data collection was framed around the 4D Cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny, emphasizing strengths, aspirations, and sustainable strategies.

**Results:** Findings revealed that despite resource constraints, DRRM Coordinators demonstrated exceptional leadership, creativity, and resilience. They built community trust, improvised disaster tools, and instilled a culture of preparedness among students and parents. Participants envisioned modern, culturally rooted, and safer schools where Indigenous knowledge is honored. They emphasized the need for stronger cultural training, improved infrastructure, emotional support systems, and community-based policy-making to sustain disaster resilience initiatives.

**Conclusion:** The study highlights DRRM Coordinators as quiet yet transformative leaders whose strengths, collaboration, and cultural pride anchor disaster preparedness in vulnerable communities. Their stories affirm that building disaster-ready schools goes beyond infrastructure—it is rooted in leadership, resilience, community spirit, and the dream of safeguarding education against all odds.

**Keywords:** Appreciative Inquiry, Disaster Risk Reduction, School Resilience, Community Empowerment, Sarangani Province

### INTRODUCTION

Disasters are a constant reality for schools in the Philippines, particularly in vulnerable regions like Sarangani Province. Educators have evolved into frontline disaster responders, often risking their safety to protect students and communities. At the heart of this effort are Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Coordinators, who play a critical role in ensuring educational continuity and community safety amid crises (DepEd, 2015). Despite national policies like DepEd Order No. 37, s. 2015, which mandates DRRM teams and regular drills, many schools remain underprepared due to resource gaps, outdated infrastructure, and limited training (Lopez & Santos, 2022).

Globally, disaster-ready schools are recognized as essential, with frameworks like the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2019) emphasizing their dual role as educational spaces and safe havens. However, developing countries like the Philippines often struggle with financial and logistical challenges, limiting their ability to fully implement these frameworks (Chen & Adefila, 2020).

In Sarangani, DRRM Coordinators face significant challenges, including managing evacuation efforts during typhoons and converting schools into temporary shelters after earthquakes. Despite these obstacles, many have



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developed innovative, community-based strategies, such as Junior Responder Clubs and strong local government partnerships (DepEd Sarangani, 2023). These grassroots efforts highlight the importance of local knowledge and collaboration in building disaster resilience (Wamsler et al., 2019).

Rather than focusing on deficits, this study uses Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to explore the strengths, strategies, and aspirations of DRRM Coordinators. AI emphasizes identifying what works, fostering ownership, and building sustainable solutions (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Watkins et al., 2011). This approach aligns with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), which calls for a holistic, inclusive, and context-sensitive approach to disaster preparedness (Wamsler et al., 2019).

This study aimed to document the lived experiences, leadership qualities, and innovative practices of DRRM Coordinators in Sarangani, providing insights to inform policy reforms and strengthen disaster resilience in education.

## Objectives

This study sought to explore and appreciate the lived experiences of DRRM Coordinators in Sarangani Province, uncovering their challenges, successes, and contributions in fostering disaster-ready schools and resilient communities. Grounded in the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework, the study aims to highlight the strengths and aspirations of these coordinators, develop strategies to reinforce their vital roles, and contribute to sustainable disaster preparedness in educational settings.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions, categorized according to the 4D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry:

### Discovery Phase

1. What were the significant experiences of DRRM Coordinators in successfully responding to disasters in their schools and communities?

### Dream Phase

2. How do DRRM Coordinators envisioned a fully disaster-resilient school, and what key elements should be in place to achieve this vision?

### Design Phase

3. Based on their experiences, what strategies were prioritized to further enhance disaster preparedness and response in schools and communities?

### Destiny Phase

4. How did DRRM Coordinators ensure the sustainability of disaster preparedness programs and initiatives in their schools, and what mechanisms helped maintain these efforts over time?

## METHODS

### Research Design

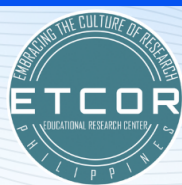
This study employed a qualitative research design rooted in Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a strength-based approach that emphasizes successes and potential over deficiencies (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Watkins et al., 2011). AI's 4D Cycle—Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny—was used to explore the lived experiences and resilience strategies of DRRM Coordinators in Sarangani Province. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and guided dialogues, capturing grassroots innovations and leadership experiences in disaster risk reduction.

### Population and Sampling

This study included Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Coordinators from public schools in disaster-prone barangays of Glan, Malapatan, and Alabel in Sarangani Province, Philippines. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on those with at least three years of direct experience in leading school-based disaster preparedness initiatives. This approach, aligned with the Appreciative Inquiry framework, prioritized coordinators who demonstrated active leadership and practical insights into disaster response and resilience (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015).

### Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide anchored on Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Watkins et al., 2011) was designed to explore DRRM Coordinators' experiences, strategies, and aspirations across the 4D Cycle—Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Open-ended questions encouraged reflective storytelling, with probes



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used to deepen responses. The instrument was validated by two experts in disaster risk management and educational leadership, ensuring cultural sensitivity and relevance. This participant-centered approach fostered the emergence of rich narratives on resilience and leadership in disaster preparedness.

### Data Collection

In-depth interviews guided by the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework were utilized to gather rich narratives from DRRM Coordinators across disaster-prone areas in Sarangani Province. Participants were purposively selected based on their active involvement in disaster preparedness initiatives.

### Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis guided by the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) 4D Cycle—Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Verbatim transcripts were reviewed to capture key insights, focusing on positive experiences and forward-looking aspirations. Codes were grouped into broader themes aligned with the 4D phases, reflecting coordinators' strengths, innovative strategies, and contributions to disaster resilience. This approach emphasized strengths over deficiencies, promoting an empowering narrative of proactive leadership.

### Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms and secure data storage. Ethical practices adhered to the standards of qualitative research, with particular sensitivity to the cultural background of the participants.

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the analyses and interpretation of data obtained from the participants of the study. The information is presented in themes with interpretation and implication. The presentation is organized based on the order of the problems in the statement of the problem.

### Discovery Phase: Exploring Strengths and Successes

#### Themes and Sub-Themes Based on Discovery Insights

**Theme 1: Envisioning Crisis-Ready Schools through Leadership Excellence; Theme 2: Cultivating the Next Generation of Youth Responders; Theme 3: Integrating Schools into the Broader Disaster Governance System, and Theme 4: Institutionalizing Everyday Safety Practices as a Culture**

The Discovery Phase explored the significant experiences of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Coordinators and the effective strategies they implemented in disaster preparedness and response within their schools and communities. Using the Appreciative Inquiry framework (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Watkins, et. al. 2011), this phase focused on recognizing existing strengths and impactful practices.

#### Theme 1: Leadership in Crisis – Calm Amid Chaos

The first theme captures how DRRM Coordinators rose to moments of disaster with calm, decisive leadership. Their stories emphasize emotional composure, strategic communication, and quick decision-making as essential factors in maintaining school safety.

##### Sub-theme 1.1: The Strategic Communicator

Person 1 described: *"I may not always carry a bandage, but I know who to call."* This response highlights the power of relational leadership, where strategic networking and coordination proved more effective than individual action.

##### Sub-theme 1.2: The Fourth-Floor Command Officer

Person 2 recalled: *"I immediately activated the savers—they quickly formed triage units."* This account demonstrates tactical composure and the effective translation of disaster drills into real-time leadership actions.





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### Sub-theme 1.3: *The Flood Evacuation Leader*

Leading evacuation efforts, Person 5 emphasized logistical management, showcasing the importance of cognitive flexibility and adaptive leadership in high-pressure situations.

### Sub-theme 1.4: *The Suspension Decision-Maker*

Person 6 shared: *"I'm the one who recommends class suspension to the principal and barangay."* Her experience illustrates anticipatory leadership, ensuring safety decisions were made proactively rather than reactively.

### Sub-theme 1.5: *Saving Lives Through Coordination*

Person 1 emphasized: *"I can call an ambulance... I make sure the area is secured so untrained people don't worsen the injury."* This highlights an often overlooked leadership skill: coordinating responses and minimizing harm through bystander management.

### Sub-theme 1.6: *Commanding Calm from the Fourth Floor*

Person 2 reflected: *"My students were calm because they knew I was there—they knew the protocol."* This scenario exemplifies Bandura's (1997) concept of collective efficacy, where trust in leadership and familiarity with protocols resulted in organized, panic-free evacuations.

## Theme 2: Building Youth Heroes – The Junior Responder Force

DRRM Coordinators actively developed student leadership through the Junior Responders Club, fostering responsibility and life-saving skills among students.

### Sub-theme 2.1: *From Medal to Meaning*

Person 1 noted: *"They're awarded medals, customized as 'Junior Responders Award of the Year.'"* Initially motivated by external rewards, students later internalized leadership values, aligning with motivational theories of internalization (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

### Sub-theme 2.2: *Lifting Non-Academic Youth Through Recognition*

Person 4 expressed: *"Not everyone excels academically... but they shine in life-saving."* This finding reinforces the inclusive nature of DRRM programs in recognizing and developing non-academic talents.

### Sub-theme 2.3: *Training the Next Line of Leaders*

Person 7 reflected: *"I used to train them, but now it's my students who train the next batch."* Sustainability through peer-led training emerged as a best practice in building disaster preparedness culture.

## Theme 3: Governance Fluency – Strategy Beyond the School Gates

Beyond schools, coordinators engaged in local governance to ensure sustained support for disaster programs.

### Sub-theme 3.1: *A Political Actor in a School Uniform*

Person 1 shared: *"I know when the budget season is and where to include DRRM."* Strategic timing and political literacy allowed her to secure regular funding, demonstrating fluency in governance systems.

### Sub-theme 3.2: *The Policy Packager*

Person 6 reported: *"I prepare packaged plans for the LGU so they can include us in the 5% DRRM fund."* Creating fundable, policy-aligned proposals proved essential for sustaining DRRM activities.

### Sub-theme 3.3: *The Stakeholder Strategist*

Person 3 emphasized: *"The MDRRMO, BFP, alumni, and PTA parents must all be part of the plan to guarantee their help."* Involving multiple stakeholders early enhanced program ownership and ensured broader community support.

## Theme 4: Consistent Everyday Leadership in Safety

Success in disaster response was anchored in daily, consistent leadership actions rather than reactive heroism.



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#### Sub-theme 4.1: *Safety in Routine*

Person 3 shared: **"I conducted drills... taught them what to do during earthquake, fire."** Routine disaster preparedness training normalized safety culture within the school.

#### Sub-theme 4.2: *The Drill Culture Builder*

Person 7 remarked: **"We haven't experienced a major disaster yet, but we always conduct drills."** Embedding preparedness in school routines reduced fear and increased response readiness.

#### Sub-theme 4.3: *Preventive Protocol Enforcer*

Person 6 added: **"I monitor if the evacuation path is still safe and if contact numbers are updated."** Regular infrastructure and systems check prevented future breakdowns during emergencies.

The Discovery Phase highlighted the diverse leadership roles of DRRM Coordinators, emphasizing proactive crisis management, student empowerment, and community collaboration. These coordinators demonstrated calm and strategic leadership during emergencies, aligning with transformational crisis leadership models that emphasize emotional intelligence and situational awareness (Lee & Liou, 2023). They prioritized pre-planning, rapid resource mobilization, and relationship management, fostering trust and collective action (James et al., 2020).

Additionally, the Junior Responders program emerged as a key strategy, reflecting the importance of youth empowerment in building resilient school cultures (Peek et al., 2020). This initiative created opportunities for non-academic achievers to gain leadership experience, fostering purpose and active citizenship among students.

Coordinators also exhibited governance fluency, actively engaging with local governments to secure DRRM funding and align school needs with broader development plans, consistent with the Whole-of-Society Approach (UNDRR, 2022). Their proactive involvement in policy advocacy and multi-sector collaboration highlighted their critical role in disaster risk governance (Kelman, 2020).

Finally, their emphasis on routine preparedness—through regular drills, protocol updates, and system maintenance—illustrated the importance of embedding resilience into daily school operations (Aldrich & Meyer, 2021). This approach institutionalizes safety as a continuous practice, reinforcing the capacity of schools to respond effectively to crises.

### DREAM PHASE: Envisioning the Ideal Future

**Theme 1: Inspired Leadership for a Safer Tomorrow; Theme 2: Empowered Youth at the Center of Resilience; Theme 3: Schools as Policy Players – Not Just Beneficiaries and Theme 4: Making Preparedness a Daily Practice**

#### Theme 1: Inspired Leadership for a Safer Tomorrow

DRRM Coordinators imagine a future where leadership is not just about responding to disasters, but cultivating shared responsibility, empowering others, and embedding resilience in everyday school life.

##### Sub-theme 1.1: *Shared Leadership and Empowerment*

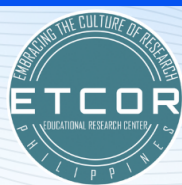
Person 1: The Connector shared: **"I may not always carry a bandage, but I know who to call."** Person 1 dreams of a school system where leadership is shared across networks, ensuring rapid and strategic disaster response through collaboration.

Person 4: The Student Enabler stated: **"The SSLG and young rescuers really participate in drills and symposiums."** Here, the dream emphasizes student empowerment, nurturing young leaders who do not merely comply with drills but lead them with understanding and purpose.

Person 6: The Community Mobilizer emphasized: **"We involve the PTA and alumni so they have a role during emergencies."** This reveals a vision where disaster readiness is not confined within the school but is expanded into the broader community, tapping into parental and alumni support networks to build resilience.

Person 7: The Institutional Organizer explained: **"We create working committees across all departments so things are coordinated."** This highlights the aspiration for systematic, department-wide disaster roles, embedding DRRM into institutional frameworks to ensure collective ownership and operational clarity.

##### Sub-theme 1.2: *Trained and Trusted Crisis Leaders*



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Person 2: The Command Officer recalled: ***"I immediately activated the savers—they quickly formed triage units."*** Person 2's vision is to develop a team so well-trained that emergency responses become reflexive, fostering confidence and speed during critical moments.

Person 3: The Safety Coach shared: ***"I always orient them about their roles so there's no confusion during a fire."*** This reveals the dream of continuous orientation, making sure everyone knows their role during emergencies, reducing panic and saving time during real crises.

Person 5: The Anticipator envisioned: ***"Before the storm arrives, everyone already knows what to do."*** Her aspiration points to readiness achieved before disaster strikes—building a culture where action plans are deeply internalized and instinctive.

Person 6: The Risk Reader emphasized: ***"I'm the one who monitors PAGASA advisories so we can declare suspensions early."*** This reflects a dream of leadership that relies on technical expertise and proactive risk monitoring, ensuring informed, timely school decisions.

Person 7: The Steady Steward reflected: ***"We continue implementing our plans even when there's no fire or typhoon."*** Her vision underscores the importance of consistency—where preparedness becomes a permanent culture rather than a seasonal or reactive measure.

## Theme 2: Empowered Youth at the Center of Resilience

Coordinators dream of young people as capable leaders, empowered through recognition, mentorship, and authentic participation in school safety systems.

### Sub-theme 2.1: Youth Recognition and Responsibility

Person 1: The Identity Shaper expressed: ***"They're awarded medals, customized as 'Junior Responders Award of the Year.'"*** Her dream reflects that acknowledgment builds identity. Students initially motivated by awards eventually internalize the deeper value of service and resilience.

### Sub-theme 2.2: Student-led Training and Mentorship

Person 7: The Youth Mentor Maker shared: ***"I used to train them, but now it's my students who train the next batch."*** This demonstrates a dream for a self-sustaining leadership cycle where students not only lead but also mentor, sustaining DRRM culture across generations.

### Sub-theme 2.3: Inclusion of Non-Academic Achievers

Person 4: The Champion of the Quiet Ones observed: ***"Some students may not excel academically, but they shine in life-saving skills."*** She dreams of schools celebrating different forms of excellence—providing platforms for students who may be academically struggling but show leadership and courage during disasters.

### Sub-theme 2.4: Integration of DRRM into School Life

Person 5: The Builder of Everyday Readiness said: ***"The students know what to do because they know the plan. They know where to pass, where to gather."*** Her vision is a school environment where disaster preparedness is automatic and internalized by students, allowing them to respond confidently and effectively without needing step-by-step supervision.

## Theme 3: Schools as Policy Players – Not Just Beneficiaries

Coordinators dream of schools taking an active role in local disaster governance—advocating for budgets, policy inclusion, and recognition as partners in community resilience.

### Sub-theme 3.1: Strategic Access to Local Budgets

Person 1: The Budget Strategist asserted: ***"I know when the budget season is and where to include DRRM."*** Her dream is for schools to understand and participate in local governance processes, securing sustainable funding for DRRM initiatives.

### Sub-theme 3.2: Policy Packaging for Visibility

Person 6: The Compliance Communicator shared: ***"I prepare packaged plans for the LGU so they can include us in the 5% DRRM fund."*** She envisions a professionalized DRRM sector where documentation, compliance, and visibility lead to consistent local government support.

### Sub-theme 3.3: Stakeholder Engagement for DRRM Inclusion





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Person 3: The Network Builder said: ***"The MDRMO, BFP, alumni, and PTA parents must all be part of the plan to guarantee their help."*** Her dream emphasizes building an inclusive, co-owned system of disaster readiness, forging strong, reliable partnerships with external and internal stakeholders.

#### **Sub-theme 3.4: Sustained Policy Commitment and Follow-through**

Person 7: The Follow-Through Leader affirmed: ***"We continue our action plan with regular meetings."*** This dream centers on consistent policy application, ensuring DRRM strategies endure beyond leadership changes or external pressures.

### **Theme 4: Making Preparedness a Daily Practice**

DRRM Coordinators envision a future where preparedness is so deeply ingrained that it becomes a living part of the school's daily culture.

#### **Sub-theme 4.1: Safety as a Routine Culture**

Person 3 stated: ***"I conducted drills... taught them what to do during earthquake, fire."*** Her dream imagines preparedness being normalized as part of students' everyday behavior and habits.

#### **Sub-theme 4.2: Anticipation Through Familiarity**

Person 7 observed: ***"We haven't experienced a major disaster yet, but we always conduct drills."*** She emphasizes a future where preparedness is maintained proactively, independent of recent events, thus embedding resilience deeply into school culture.

#### **Sub-theme 4.3: Maintenance and System Readiness**

Person 6 affirmed: ***"I monitor evacuation paths and update contact numbers."*** Her dream focuses on technical maintenance and the discipline of keeping evacuation plans, emergency systems, and communication tools constantly updated and ready.

The Dream Phase reflects DRRM Coordinators' aspirations for proactive, resilient schools. They aim to cultivate shared leadership, emphasizing collective responsibility among staff, students, and parents through continuous training and capacity building (Harris, 2019; James et al., 2020). They also seek to empower students as active leaders, promoting mentorship, diverse talent recognition, and holistic skill development (Peek et al., 2020; Mitra & Serriere, 2019).

Additionally, coordinators envision schools as proactive community partners, building strong ties with LGUs, mastering budget negotiations, and professionalizing DRRM initiatives (Kelman, 2020; UNDRR, 2022). Finally, they aspire to embed preparedness into daily routines, integrating regular drills and anticipatory planning to create a culture of continuous resilience (Aldrich & Meyer, 2021; Brooks et al., 2020).

### **DESIGN PHASE: Co-Creating Strategies for Resilience**

#### **Theme 1: Structuring Shared Leadership and Decision Making; Theme 2: Designing Sustainable Youth Leadership Programs ; Theme 3: Embedding DRRM into Governance and Policy and Theme 4: Operationalizing Preparedness into Daily Routines**

The Design Phase captured how DRRM Coordinators envisioned translating their aspirations into concrete, sustainable strategies for strengthening disaster resilience within schools and communities. Their co-constructed designs are presented below, following the major themes and sub-themes with direct quotations from participants and immediate interpretation.

#### **Theme 1: Structuring Shared Leadership and Decision-Making**

This theme focuses on building school-wide systems where disaster resilience is sustained through distributed roles, partnerships, and institutional integration.



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### Sub-theme 1.1: Cross-Departmental Coordination

Person 7 shared: *"We create working committees across all departments so things are coordinated."* Person 7 emphasized the importance of involving every department in disaster preparedness. Her design proposes that DRRM is not a specialized task but an integrated responsibility across the school.

### Sub-theme 1.2: Involving Students in Leadership Roles

Person 4 described: *"The SSLG and young rescuers really participate in drills and symposiums."* Her strategy values youth agency, proposing students take active leadership in drills and awareness activities. This approach reflects Mitra and Serriere's (2019) advocacy for

### Sub-theme 1.3: Bridging School and Community through Committees

Person 6 emphasized: *"We involve the PTA and alumni so they have a role during emergencies."* Person 6's design recognizes that schools are part of larger ecosystems. By engaging parents and alumni, she builds a web of support critical for real-time response and resource mobilization.

### Sub-theme 1.4: Routine DRRM Meetings for Role Alignment

Person 5 noted: *"We include DRRM in our school plans and activities; we train everyone regularly."* Her design ensures that disaster preparedness remains an active agenda in school operations.

## Theme 2: Designing Sustainable Youth Leadership Programs

This theme highlights the creation of structured youth responder programs to ensure continuity, inclusivity, and empowerment.

### Sub-theme 2.1: Recognition as Motivation

Person 1 explained: *"They're awarded medals, customized as 'Junior Responders Award of the Year.'"* Person 1's design uses recognition as an entry point to deeper student engagement. While awards initially attract participation, over time, they cultivate pride, ownership, and internalized values.

### Sub-theme 2.2: Student-to-Student Mentorship

Person 7 highlighted: *"I used to train them, but now it's my students who train the next batch."* Her design focuses on sustainability through peer mentorship, ensuring that leadership and knowledge transfer are continuous. This mirrors the model of youth-led resilience building promoted by Peek et al. (2020).

### Sub-theme 2.3: Inclusivity of All Learners

Person 4 shared: *"Some students may not excel academically, but they shine in life-saving skills."* Her strategy fosters inclusivity by recognizing and valuing diverse student strengths

### Sub-theme 2.4: Integration in Daily School Practice

Person 5 explained: *"The students know what to do because they know the plan. They know where to pass, where to gather."* Her design embeds DRRM into students' instincts through repeated practice, emphasizing that true resilience arises from habitual readiness (Brooks et al., 2020).

## Theme 3: Embedding DRRM into Governance and Policy

This theme discusses how DRRM Coordinators designed strategies to secure formal policy support and budget allocations.

### Sub-theme 3.1: Policy Packaging and Budget Advocacy

Person 6 shared: *"I prepare packaged plans for the LGU so they can include us in the 5% DRRM fund."* Her strategy involves aligning proposals with LGU requirements to ensure schools are included in disaster budgets.

### Sub-theme 3.2: Aligning Plans to Secure School Inclusion

Person 1 described: *"I know when the budget season is and where to include DRRM."* Her design shows the critical role of timing and political awareness in successfully advocating for DRRM resources

### Sub-theme 3.3: Collaborative Stakeholder Inclusion

Person 3 emphasized: *"The MDRRMO, BFP, alumni, and PTA parents must all be part of the plan to guarantee their help."* Her design strengthens disaster readiness through shared ownership, consistent with Twigg's (2015) model of inclusive DRR frameworks.





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#### Theme 4: Operationalizing Preparedness into Daily Routines

This theme illustrates how DRRM Coordinators proposed embedding disaster readiness into everyday school practices.

##### Sub-theme 4.1: Regular Orientation and Drills

Person 3 explained: *"I conducted drills... taught them what to do during earthquake, fire."* Her design focuses on habit formation through consistent, familiar drills, reducing panic and confusion during real emergencies, in line with Brooks et al.'s (2020) emphasis on procedural training.

##### Sub-theme 4.2: Preemptive Planning and Communication

Person 5 emphasized: *"Before the storm arrives, everyone already knows what to do."* She highlights the power of proactive planning, where action plans are internalized before disasters strike, reinforcing Cutter et al.'s (2016) concept of dynamic resilience systems.

##### Sub-theme 4.3: Consistent DRRM Planning

Person 7 described: *"We continue our action plan with regular meetings."* Her strategy ensures that DRRM is maintained even during periods without disaster threats, cultivating a resilience culture.

##### Sub-theme 4.4: Technical Readiness and Safety Checks

Person 6 noted: *"I monitor evacuation paths and update contact numbers."* Her design emphasizes preventive maintenance—keeping emergency infrastructure and communication systems functional, a fundamental part of resilience building (Aldrich & Meyer, 2021).

The Design Phase emphasized the role of DRRM Coordinators as architects of school resilience. They proposed structured leadership models, youth empowerment programs, policy advocacy, and routine preparedness protocols, transforming schools from vulnerable institutions into empowered, risk-informed communities.

Their designs reflect distributed leadership (Harris, 2019) and inclusive disaster governance (Kelman, 2020; UNDRR, 2022), emphasizing that resilience should be embedded in collaborative systems rather than isolated actions. By aligning their efforts with the Whole-of-Society Approach, they aim to institutionalize disaster readiness through school governance, strong community linkages, and continuous preparedness (UNDRR, 2022; Peek et al., 2020; Aldrich & Meyer, 2021).

#### DESTINY PHASE: Sustaining and Strengthening DRRM Efforts

**Theme 1: Sustaining Shared Leadership Systems; Theme 2: Youth as Future Guardians of Safety; Theme 3: Schools as Consistent Policy Players and Theme 4: Living Preparedness as a Schoolwide Culture**

The Destiny Phase captured how DRRM Coordinators envisioned the long-term sustainability of their disaster resilience initiatives. Their reflections focused on embedding leadership, empowering youth, strengthening policy engagement, and making preparedness a lived, daily culture. This phase presents their concrete strategies, interpreted through thematic analysis.

##### Theme 1: Sustaining Shared Leadership Systems

This theme reflects the participants' commitment to creating disaster resilience systems that persist beyond individual leadership tenure. They aim to institutionalize shared responsibility across school structures.

##### Sub-theme 1.1: Continuity Through Role Sharing

Person 7 shared: *"The role-sharing will continue even after I retire."* Person 7 emphasized the importance of creating a leadership system that survives transitions. Her design focuses on embedding preparedness into organizational routines and institutional memory, ensuring that DRRM does not rely on any one individual.

##### Sub-theme 1.2: Collective Accountability and Departmental Involvement

Person 5 described: *"We include DRRM in our school plans and activities; we train everyone regularly."* She integrates DRRM responsibilities across departments and staff functions. By embedding preparedness into school plans, she creates a collective culture of accountability.

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### Sub-theme 1.3: Building a System That Survives Transitions

Person 1 explained: *"I know when the budget season is and where to include DRRM."*

Her design highlights the importance of embedding DRRM into governance cycles like annual budget planning. Aligning preparedness initiatives with formal institutional processes enhances their sustainability (UNDRR, 2022).

## Theme 2: Youth as Future Guardians of Safety

This theme emphasizes the belief that students must be empowered as continuous bearers of the DRRM culture in schools.

### Sub-theme 2.1: Passing the Torch Through Mentorship

Person 1 observed: *"Even the new batch already knows what to do."* She envisions leadership continuity among students through active mentorship. Senior students model readiness for new batches, a strategy that echoes Peek et al.'s (2020) view that youth participation builds intergenerational resilience.

### Sub-theme 2.2: Students Leading Students

Person 7 described: *"I used to train them, but now it's my students who train the next batch."* Her model promotes student leadership succession, ensuring that youth leaders are self-sustaining.

### Sub-theme 2.3: Giving All Students a Place to Shine

Person 4 emphasized: *"Some students may not excel academically, but they shine in life-saving skills."* Her inclusive approach recognizes diverse student strengths, providing leadership opportunities for those traditionally marginalized in academic spaces (Gardner, 2011).

### Sub-theme 2.4: Training as Culture, Not Just Compliance

Person 3 stressed: *"I always orient them about their roles so there's no confusion during a fire."* Her strategy normalizes preparedness through repeated orientations and practice, aligning with Aldrich and Meyer's (2021) assertion that resilience must be a habitual, not episodic, behavior.

## Theme 3: Schools as Consistent Policy Players

This theme highlights the need for schools to maintain active participation in DRRM policy, budgeting, and community partnerships.

### Sub-theme 3.1: Sustaining LGU Budget Inclusion

Person 6 explained: *"I will continue submitting plans every year so we're included in the LGU budget."* She demonstrates that consistent policy engagement secures sustained funding, aligning with Twigg's (2015) emphasis on persistent local governance participation for disaster risk reduction.

### Sub-theme 3.2: Timing and Budget Awareness

Person 1 emphasized: *"I know when the budget season is and where to include DRRM."* Her strategy reflects a sophisticated understanding of local government processes, ensuring that DRRM priorities are not overlooked during critical decision-making periods (Kelman, 2020).

### Sub-theme 3.3: Building Multi-Sectoral Support

Person 3 highlighted: *"The MDRRMO, BFP, alumni, and PTA parents must all be part of the plan to guarantee their help."* Her focus on stakeholder engagement builds a web of partnerships critical to school resilience, supporting UNDRR's (2022) call for Whole-of-Society collaboration in disaster risk reduction.

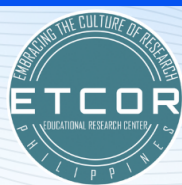
## Theme 4: Living Preparedness as a Schoolwide Culture

The final theme showcases efforts to make disaster readiness a natural, daily aspect of school life rather than an emergency-driven activity.

### Sub-theme 4.1: Preparedness as Routine Behavior

Person 3 stated: *"They always practice—not just when there's an earthquake."* Her practice of integrating drills into everyday activities fosters automatic, calm responses in crises.

### Sub-theme 4.2: Visibility and Familiarity in School Spaces



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Person 5 shared: **"Before the storm arrives, everyone already knows what to do."** She emphasizes building visible preparedness cues into the school environment, reducing uncertainty and strengthening psychological readiness (Cutter et al., 2016).

#### **Sub-theme 4.3: Consistency in Planning and Practice**

Person 7 explained: **"We continue our action plan with regular meetings."** Her emphasis on continuous updating and reinforcement keeps preparedness plans active and evolving, preventing complacency and ensuring adaptability.

#### **Sub-theme 4.4: Daily Technical Checks and Oversight**

Person 6 stressed: **"I monitor evacuation paths and update contact numbers."** Her technical oversight approach demonstrates that infrastructure maintenance and updated communications are vital elements of resilience systems (Aldrich & Meyer, 2021).

The Destiny Phase emphasizes that DRRM Coordinators view sustainability as an active, ongoing commitment rather than a passive goal. They aim to embed resilience into school culture through shared leadership, youth empowerment, continuous policy engagement, and routine preparedness. This approach aligns with the Whole-of-Society model, emphasizing strong systems, leadership succession, and a culture of everyday safety (UNDRR, 2022).

### **Conclusion**

The study illuminated the pivotal role of DRRM Coordinators in nurturing disaster-ready schools and resilient communities in Glan, Sarangani Province. Their leadership was not born out of formal authority alone but out of deep commitment, collaboration, and everyday action. Across all four phases of Appreciative Inquiry, it became clear that resilience was not simply about having protocols or infrastructure—it was about building a living culture of preparedness through people, systems, and shared purpose.

DRRM Coordinators demonstrated that leadership in disaster risk reduction is most powerful when it is shared, inclusive, and sustained across generations. They empowered students as young leaders, bridged communities and local governments, and normalized preparedness into the school's daily routines. Their actions showed that with heart, strategy, and collaboration, even resource-constrained schools could transform into strongholds of safety and hope.

Ultimately, this study affirms that building disaster-ready schools goes beyond compliance—it demands nurturing leadership, trust, and a culture where resilience is lived every day. In the faces of these coordinators and their students lies the future of safer, stronger communities.

### **Recommendation**

To sustain disaster resilience in schools, leadership structures must be institutionalized by embedding DRRM responsibilities across departments, students, and parent groups, ensuring continuity beyond individual leaders. Youth engagement should be strengthened through Junior Responder Clubs and peer mentorship programs. Schools must formalize their participation in LGU planning, aligning DRRM proposals with budget cycles. Preparedness should become part of daily routines through regular drills, clear signage, and updated evacuation plans. Diverse student talents must be recognized, valuing both academic and life-saving skills. Technical readiness must be systematically maintained, while a whole-of-community approach should actively involve external partners like MDRMOs, BFP, alumni, and PTAs. Finally, capacity-building efforts must include emotional resilience and trauma-informed disaster response to prepare both coordinators and students for future challenges.

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