

Analyzing urban rituals in the context of building social capital for disaster resilience: A Case Study of Kishiwada

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This study attempts to analyze the role of social capital developed through ritual events in building a disaster resilient community. Disaster resilience is understood as a pre disaster capacity to cope with uncertainties in the social life of people. Kishiwada city in Osaka is chosen for a case study because of the existence of popular Danjiri Matsuri which is celebrated annually as a major ritual event.

Questionnaire survey accompanied by interviews with key informants has been used as a methodology for the study. The survey comprises of specific questions on social capital, perceptions on ritual event, how often people participate in the event, disaster awareness and self reliance. World Bank list of questionnaires on social capital has been referred to prepare the survey questionnaires. Around 1400 questionnaire sheets were distributed in two school districts within Kishiwada. Four hundred and eighty five total valid responses were received from the survey which has been utilized for the analysis.

The preliminary findings show that ritual events are contributing in developing both bonding and bridging social capital in the community at Kishiwada. Bonding social capital is assessed in terms of level of interaction and involvement in community activities, while bridging social capital is assessed in terms of involvement in activities beyond one's own community. It can be expected that involvement in ritual practices promotes

interaction among people both within and outside the community. At the same time, it can help to develop trust which contributes in building awareness about existing hazards and self reliance among local residents.

Though the study area hasn't suffered from severe disaster in the recent past, it is prone to water related disaster such as tsunami and flood. In order to cope with extreme events such as disasters it is important to maintain social integrity for collective action. In this context, ritual and the associated organization or Chonakai in Kishiwada is acting as a social scheme to sustain social bond and upkeep the resilience of the community. During an interview, a Chonakai leader responds that higher trust among residents can be very important to make quick decisions and execute assigned tasks during the critical hours of disaster. The study shows that ritual based social system such as Chonakai can be crucial to mobilize residents to work collectively during critical hours of disasters. However, respondents aren't conscious about the linkage between the ritual events and disasters at present. Despite this fact, sufficient scope exists for community based disaster management organizations to utilize the inbuilt social system of Kishiwada in order to disseminate disaster information and outreach the disaster prone community. Also, various ritual related public resources can be used by the community in case of emergencies during disaster.