



(ISSN: 2587-0238)

Işık Mercan, S. (2022). The effect of disaster training on attitudes towards disaster in cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions, *International Journal of Education Technology and Scientific Researches*, 7(19), 1925-1937.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.35826/ijetsar.510>

Article Type (Makale Türü): Research Article

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## THE EFFECT OF DISASTER TRAINING ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISASTER IN COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DIMENSIONS

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Received: 26.05.2022

Accepted: 17.08.2022

Published: 02.09.2022

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of the disaster training provided to university students in the scope of the Contemporary World Problems (CWPs) Course on cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes towards disasters. The study, which had a quasi-experimental design, was conducted with university students aged 18 and over who volunteered to participate in the study. A total of 111 (experimental group) and 114 (control group) students who were not trained on the CWPs course were included in the study. The efficiency of the training was measured with the Disaster Attitude Scale. In the cognitive dimension, the mean score of the experimental group was found to be higher at a statistically significant level than the control group ( $p=0.000$ ). In the affective dimension, the mean score of the experimental group was significantly lower than that of the control group ( $p=0.006$ ). In the behavioral dimension, the mean score of the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group ( $p=0.000$ ). It was also found that disaster training provided to university students in the scope of the CWPs Course affects the cognitive and behavioral attitudes of the students towards disasters positively, and reduces the level of anxiety in the affective dimension.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, contemporary world problems, disaster training, university student.

## INTRODUCTION

The number and effects of disasters in the world increase from year to year and millions of people become victims of disasters every year. According to the “The Human Cost of Disasters: An Overview of the Past 20 Years 2000-2019” Report of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 4.212 natural disasters took approximately 1.19 million lives worldwide, and over one billion people were directly affected by disasters, with an economic loss of 1.63 trillion USD (UNDRR, 2020). Turkey ranks fourth in terms of 77 great earthquakes that occurred as of 1900 although it makes up only 0.05% of the world’s total area, and is located in a geographical area of the world that can be described as high risk (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency [AFAD], 2018). Many other disasters along with earthquakes threaten Turkey seriously, especially in recent years, with the effects of global warming being felt intensely (Akay, 2019). To prevent or minimize the devastating effects of possible disasters, disaster training aimed at increasing awareness are inevitable (Mızrak, 2018; AFAD, 2022).

Considering the past, it was seen that the 1980s were the years when then-present disaster management policies were questioned all over the world, and important steps were taken globally until the beginning of the 2000s. Despite these, the UNDRR Report published in 2021 highlights the low investment in disaster prevention and reduction of disaster risk for the world’s most vulnerable countries and states that major disasters have doubled in the last 20 years, giving a global-scale alarm (UNDRR, 2021). Although the organization conducts independent and coordinated activities in the fight against disasters, the failure to achieve the desired outputs shows the awareness of disaster as an issue that must be considered more (Özesen-Çolak, 2016; Yılmaz, 2016). When the studies in this field and relevant institutions, which Turkey also supports, focused on crisis management, helping people, and wound-healing, after the 7.8 magnitude Marmara Earthquake in 1999, it evolved into risk management. One of the most important reflections of this was the increasing importance provided to disaster readiness and ensuring that the consequences of possible disasters are less costly in all respects (Yılmaz, 2016). Disaster training is among the most important things to be performed to be prepared for disasters and to minimize the effects of a possible disaster. Many projects were implemented on disaster training, and are continuing to be implemented. However, one of the important points here is that training is performed by the state, obligatory, in a certain program, and in a sustainable way (Development Plan, 2014; İnal et al., 2018). When the studies conducted on disaster training in Turkey were evaluated, it was seen that the training activities were performed by official institutions, non-governmental organizations, and various private organizations (Özesen Çolak, 2016; Yılmaz, 2016). With the announcement of 2021 as the Disaster Training Year in Turkey, cooperation was made with these organizations to raise awareness of disaster in the society, reduce the risk of disaster, and create a behavioral change in taking precautions. Also, with AFAD’s “Turkey Ready for Disaster Project”, training activities continue for all segments of the society, starting from the individual, to be prepared for the first 72 hours of disasters (AFAD, 2022a).

It is seen that the spatial distribution of the disaster training research is not usual because the types and order of importance of disasters all over the world vary from country to country. It was found that disaster training is

mostly concentrated in Europe, equally distributed in Asia and Africa, and scattered in North America.<sup>5,12</sup> The importance of disaster training has been emphasized in the international literature on dealing with natural disasters or awareness on disasters, especially in recent years.<sup>12-16</sup>

### ***Importance of the Study***

In recent years, when the training on disaster awareness is performed as optional online training in all universities in Turkey, it is included in the higher training program as a compulsory course in various departments. However, some of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors to be acquired regarding disaster awareness are included in the Contemporary World Problems (CWPs) course at universities (Özgen, 2012; Özey, 2001; Yazıcı & Arıbaş, 2011; Sayhan & Çamurcu, 2013). It was found that the studies conducted in the scope of CWPs or environmental problems in the sub-context are not adequate to develop disaster awareness (Uymaz, 2021; Tekin & Dikmenli, 2021; Turan et al., 2018, Bozyiğit & Kaya, 2017; Coşkun, 2011; Aydın, 2010; Cin, 2010). However, the more information individuals have about disasters, the more they will show the desired attitudes and behaviors. For this reason, it is extremely important to inform students on disasters and their effects that concern society at the national and international level, raise awareness, and encourage students to be involved actively in the solution of related problems (Uymaz, 2021). The ultimate target of disaster training is to help students understand the relations between natural disasters, the environment, and people, to ensure that they are aware of disaster prevention and reduction, and to make the right decisions to protect their safety when faced with disasters (Zhang & Wang, 2022). On the other hand, disaster training must also ensure that the lifestyles that students transform into behaviors are compatible with the sustainable environment concept. For this reason, disaster training must not only be knowledge training but also behavior training. The outputs of the experimental studies to be performed in this regard will make significant contributions to the literature.

## **METHOD**

### ***Study Aim and Hypothesis***

In the present study, the purpose was to examine the effects of disaster training provided to university students in the scope of the CWPs course on cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes towards disasters. The hypothesis of the study is as follows: H0: The training provided in the scope of the CWPs course does not affect the Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral attitudes of students regarding the disaster. H1: The training provided in the scope of the CWPs course affects the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of students regarding disaster attitudes.

### ***Study Design***

The present study, which was planned in the semi-experimental design, was conducted in Kütahya in the 2021-2022 Academic Year. The population of the study consisted of 2nd-year students studying at Kütahya

Dumlupınar University in different faculties, aged 18 and over, who volunteered to participate in the study. The minimum sample size was calculated as 210 (experimental group: 105, control group: 105) with  $\alpha=0.05$  and 95% power for the difference between the mean of two independent groups according to 0.50 effect size in the G\*Power 3.1 Program (Faul et al., 2007).

To measure the efficiency of disaster training, all students were asked the question “Have you ever received disaster training?” and those who answered “No” were included in the study. Among these, 111 students who enrolled in the CWPs course in the relevant academic year were included in the experimental group, and 114 students who did not take this course were included in the control group. The Disaster Attitude Scale, which can measure attitudes in Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral dimensions, was applied to the control group without any training (Türkan & Kılıç, 2017). The scale was applied to the control group before the training of the experimental group to prevent the students from contacting in terms of peer education. The disaster training to be provided to the experimental group was planned in the scope of the common elective course CWPs. The content of the training was determined under the headings of what disasters are and their formation processes, readiness, response, and improvement activities related to disasters. E-books, videos, and presentations that were prepared by AFAD (2021, 2021a) and Istanbul University (2016) were used as training materials. Training was provided interactively and online for three weeks, 2 hours a week. The efficiency of the training was measured with the Disaster Attitude Scale 4 weeks after the training to obtain the outputs related to the permanence of the knowledge obtained by the students and its transformation into behavior (Türkan & Kılıç, 2017).

### ***Data Collection***

The data were collected online through social media accounts by creating a Google Form. As the first question of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to confirm that they participated in the study voluntarily, and it was ensured that the students who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study answered the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of the Descriptive Form and Disaster Attitude Scale that were prepared by the researcher.

### ***Descriptive Form***

The form consisted of three questions that were developed by the researcher, including age, gender, and whether they had received disaster training before.

### ***Disaster Attitude Scale***

Disaster Attitude Scale (DAS) was developed by Türkan & Kılıç (2017) to determine the attitudes towards disasters in cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The scale had a 5-point likert style and consisted of 23 items with three sub-dimensions; Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral. The Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficients of the sub-dimensions were reported as 0.86, 0.89, and 0.85, respectively (Türkan & Kılıç, 2017). The Cronbach’s

Alpha Coefficients for Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral sub-dimensions were calculated as 0.89, 0.91, and 0.83, respectively in the study.

**Study Analysis**

Descriptive tests, number (n), percentage (%), mean, and Standard Deviation (SD) were used in the analysis. The normality of the distribution was tested with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, and the reliability of the data was evaluated with the Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient. The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare the means of two independent groups in the data that showed nonparametric distribution. The data were analyzed in the SPSS 22.0 statistical package program, and the significance level was taken as  $p < 0.05$ .

**FINDINGS**

The mean age of the Control Group, which consisted of 60.2% women, was found to be  $20.85 \pm 1.85$  years, and the mean age of the Experimental Group, which consisted of 58.9% women, was  $21.06 \pm 1.52$ . No statistically significant differences were detected between the groups in terms of age and gender distribution ( $p > 0.05$ ) (not shown in the table).

**Table1.** The Descriptive Statistics of Participants’ Attitudes Towards Disaster in Cognitive Dimension

Items	Experimental group (n=111)				Control group (n=114)				p-value
	None/ Mild %	Mode rate %	A lot /Fully %	Mean $\pm$ SD	None/ Mild %	Mode rate %	A lot /Fully %	Mean $\pm$ SD	
I have basic knowledge about disasters.	26.4	55.9	71.4	<b>3.13 <math>\pm</math> 0.72</b>	73.6	44.1	28.6	<b>2.54 <math>\pm</math> 0.81</b>	<b>0.000</b>
I know how to reduce and/or eliminate the risk factors regarding disasters.	27.9	52.1	77.5	<b>3.14 <math>\pm</math> 0.76</b>	72.1	47.9	22.5	<b>2.47 <math>\pm</math> 0.88</b>	<b>0.000</b>
I have adequate knowledge about family disaster plans.	31.1	59.5	76.3	<b>2.95 <math>\pm</math> 0.94</b>	68.9	40.5	23.7	<b>2.17 <math>\pm</math> 1.02</b>	<b>0.000</b>
I have sufficient knowledge about the disaster safety of the house/dormitory where I live.	38.8	61.2	69.0	<b>2.64 <math>\pm</math> 1.00</b>	61.2	38.8	31.0	<b>2.10 <math>\pm</math> 1.00</b>	<b>0.000</b>
I know what the non-structural risk factors are in the house/dormitory where I live.	42.4	49.4	87.0	<b>2.59 <math>\pm</math> 1.07</b>	57.6	50.6	13.0	<b>2.16 <math>\pm</math> 0.82</b>	<b>0.003</b>
I know what I must do to reduce the non-structural risk factors in my house/dormitory.	31.9	61.3	81.3	<b>2.87 <math>\pm</math> 0.94</b>	68.1	38.8	18.8	<b>2.21 <math>\pm</math> 0.78</b>	<b>0.000</b>
I know how to behave in crowded places (i.e. shopping malls, schools, public transportation vehicles, social activity areas, etc.) during a disaster.	29.4	52.1	59.0	<b>3.41 <math>\pm</math> 0.91</b>	70.6	47.9	41.0	<b>2.95 <math>\pm</math> 1.14</b>	<b>0.002</b>

The descriptive statistics of the participants' attitudes towards disaster in the cognitive dimension are provided in Table 1. For each item in the cognitive dimension, the mean item scores in the Experimental Group were found to be higher at a statistically significant level than in the Control Group ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 2.** The Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Attitudes Towards Disaster in Affective Dimension

Items	Experimental group (n=111)				Control group (n=114)				p-value
	None/ Mild %	Mode rate %	A lot /Fully %	Mean ± SD	None/ Mild %	Mode rate %	A lot /Fully %	Mean ± SD	
The possibility of disaster in the city where I live frightens me.	44.7	49.3	51.4	3.43 ± 1.11	55.3	50.7	48.6	3.45 ± 1.13	0.938
The possibility of disaster in the country where I live frightens me.	56.5	70.7	42.9	<b>3.68 ± 0.99</b>	43.5	29.3	57.1	<b>4.09 ± 1.09</b>	<b>0.000</b>
The fact that necessary precautions are not taken for a possible disaster makes me uneasy.	41.2	68.3	45.5	<b>3.88 ± 0.90</b>	58.8	31.7	54.5	<b>4.19 ± 1.04</b>	<b>0.002</b>
Being in crowded places (i.e. shopping malls, schools, public transportation vehicles, social activity areas, etc.) during a disaster worries me.	41.0	66.1	44.6	3.50 ± 0.97	59.0	33.9	55.4	3.70 ± 1.24	0.050
I am concerned that I can be reached in a short time during a possible disaster.	53.3	56.5	45.1	<b>3.53 ± 0.93</b>	46.7	43.5	54.9	<b>3.76 ± 1.07</b>	<b>0.041</b>
The possibility of Search & Rescue teams not being able to reach me in a short time after a possible disaster worries me.	52.4	58.2	45.6	<b>3.68 ± 0.90</b>	47.6	41.8	54.4	<b>3.93 ± 1.01</b>	<b>0.023</b>
The thought of not getting enough support (i.e. material, psychological, shelter) after a possible disaster worries me.	50.0	61.2	45.3	3.67 ± 0.99	50.0	38.8	54.7	3.85 ± 1.11	0.062
I am afraid of having communication problems with my close circle (i.e. family, friends, etc.) after a possible disaster.	50.0	50.0	49.0	3.68 ± 1.16	50.0	50.0	51.0	3.68 ± 1.10	0.936
It is worrying for me that social awareness in our country only increases in disaster situations.	16.7	65.2	47.3	4.01 ± 0.82	83.3	34.8	52.7	4.04 ± 1.11	0.227

The descriptive statistics of the participants' attitudes towards disaster in the affective dimension are given in Table 2. In the affective dimension, the mean score of the Experimental Group in the statements "The possibility of being exposed to a disaster in the country where I live in frightens me", "Not taking the necessary precautions before a possible disaster makes me uneasy", "I am worried that I can be reached in a short time during a possible disaster", and "I am worried that Search & Rescue teams may not be able to reach me in a short time after a possible disaster" was found to be lower at a statistically significant level than the mean score of the Control Group ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3.** The Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Attitudes Towards Disaster in the Behavioral Dimension

Items	Experimental group (n=111)				Control group (n=114)				p-value
	None/Mild %	Mode rate %	A lot /Fully %	Mean ± SD	None/Mild %	Mode rate %	A lot /Fully %	Mean ± SD	
I think I am prepared for a possible disaster.	34.1	65.9	82.4	<b>2.66 ± 0.99</b>	65.9	34.1	17.6	<b>1.93 ± 0.85</b>	0.000
I back up my personal information and documents for a possible disaster.	42.6	60.0	80.0	<b>2.23 ± 1.18</b>	57.4	40.0	20.0	<b>1.88 ± 0.90</b>	0.030
We have prepared our family disaster plan against any possible disaster.	41.7	70.0	100.0	<b>2.02 ± 1.12</b>	58.3	30.0	0.0	<b>1.43 ± 0.68</b>	0.000
I have a disaster and emergency kit.	45.0	76.9	52.6	<b>1.82 ± 1.22</b>	55.0	23.1	47.4	<b>1.45 ± 1.00</b>	0.005
Individual precautions e.g. a fire detector and a fire extinguisher have been taken in the house where I live with my family.	42.0	89.3	62.5	<b>1.96 ± 1.17</b>	58.0	10.7	37.5	<b>1.57 ± 0.88</b>	0.013
I have the necessary knowledge and training to protect myself during a disaster.	35.9	56.5	63.4	<b>2.92 ± 1.01</b>	64.1	43.5	36.6	<b>2.38 ± 1.07</b>	0.000
In emergencies, I provide the necessary communication correctly.	36.0	53.0	69.2	<b>2.98 ± 0.92</b>	64.0	47.0	30.8	<b>2.50 ± 0.84</b>	0.000

The descriptive statistics of the participants' attitudes towards disaster in the behavioral dimension are given in Table 3. For each item in the cognitive dimension, it was determined that the mean item scores in the Experimental Group were higher at a statistically significant level than the Control Group ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 4.** The Comparison of Disaster Attitude Scale Sub-Dimension Mean Scores

Sub-dimensions	Experimental group (n=111)			Control group (n=114)			z value	p-value
	Mean ± SD	Mean rank	Min.-Max.	Mean ± SD	Mean rank	Min.-Max.		
Cognitive Dimension	20.73 ± 4.75	138.50	10-33	16.60 ± 4.83	88.17	8-26	-5.814	0.000
Affective Dimension	33.06 ± 6.37	100.96	16-45	34.69 ± 7.74	124.72	11-45	-2.743	0.006
Behavioral Dimension	16.59 ± 5.64	134.56	7-35	13.13 ± 3.73	92.01	7-22	-4.915	0.000

The mean scores in the comparison of the sub-dimension of the participants on the Disaster Attitude Scale are given in Table 4. In the cognitive dimension, the mean score of the Experimental Group ( $20.73 \pm 4.75$ ) was found to be higher at a statistically significant level than the Control Group ( $16.60 \pm 4.83$ ) ( $p=0.000$ ). In the affective dimension, the mean score of the Experimental Group ( $33.06 \pm 6.37$ ) was significantly lower than that of the Control Group ( $34.69 \pm 7.74$ ) ( $p=0.006$ ). In the behavioral dimension, the mean score of the Experimental Group ( $16.59 \pm 5.64$ ) was found to be higher at a statistically significant level than the Control Group ( $13.13 \pm 3.73$ ) ( $p=0.000$ ).

## **CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION**

The effects of disaster training provided to university students in the scope of CWPs course on attitudes towards disasters were investigated in this quasi-experimental study. It was found that training affected students' attitudes towards disasters in cognitive and behavioral dimensions positively, and reduced the level of anxiety in the affective dimension.

When the effects of disaster training provided to students on their cognitive attitudes towards disasters were examined, it was found that the mean scores of the experimental group students for each item were higher at a statistically significant level than the Control Group for each item when compared to the control group students. It is an expected result that the training provided will yield positive results in favor of the experimental group in the cognitive dimension. This result was supported by the article "The Effects of Disaster Training on Public Readiness and Mitigation for Earthquakes: A Cross-Country Comparison Between Fukui, Japan and the San Francisco Bay Area, California, USA" by Tanaka (2005). Similarly, some studies conducted in Turkey also support the results obtained in this study (Şahan & Dinç, 2021; Erdoğan, 2010; Özgüven, 2006). Also, in the study conducted by Gerdan and Kırıkkaya (2016) with the title "University Students Assess the Achievement of the E-Learning Outcomes of Disasters and Mitigation and Disaster Management Courses", it was determined that the learning outcomes of the 2 courses related to disaster training, which was performed with e-learning, were above the expected levels.

When the sub-items of the participants' affective attitudes towards disasters such as "The possibility of being exposed to a disaster in the country I live in frighten me", "Not taking the necessary precautions before a possible disaster makes me uneasy", "I am concerned that I can be reached in a short time during a possible disaster", the sub-items of the experiment were examined, the mean score of the experimental group was found to be lower at a statistically significant level than the mean score of the control group. As the level of knowledge increases, the fact that they see themselves as more competent in crisis management can be shown as the underlying reason for this outcome. Because Chou et al. (2015) reported that disaster prevention literacy affects attitudes towards disaster prevention positively. In their study, Tkachuck et al. (2018) investigated the readiness levels of university students for natural disasters and revealed that perceived and actual readiness were close to each other, but not completely equivalent. According to this result, the reflections of the affective attitude dimension of the disaster training must be investigated in more detail.



When the findings on the sub-items of the participants' attitudes towards disaster in the behavioral dimension were examined, it was found that the mean item scores of the experimental group were higher at a statistically significant level than in the control group. When the fact that the items in the behavioral dimension were skill-based was considered, it can be argued that disaster awareness studies achieved their purpose thanks to the transformation of knowledge into behavior, as stated by Zhang and Wang (2022). Similarly, according to the results of a study conducted by Baytiyeh and Öcal (2016), which investigated the disaster awareness of students in Turkey, it was found that Turkish students had more skills in disaster awareness than Lebanese students and the outcomes of disaster training were more positive for Turkish students. Syahril et al. (2021) reported a positive relationship between high school students' knowledge and readiness for disasters. An opposite finding was reported in the study of Türkan and Kılıç (2017). Similarly, in a study conducted at Midwestern University, Lovekamp et al. (2011) reported that although students were aware of risks, they took little action on the need to be better prepared for a disaster. When the study that was conducted by Collins (2017) was examined in behavioral terms, it was found that African-Americans were not personally prepared enough for a disaster. In a study, Turan et al. (2018) examined the disaster and emergency readiness studies and their effectiveness in a higher education institution in Turkey and found that the duties and responsibilities of all individuals in the institution in disaster and emergencies, as well as the level of readiness and knowledge, were not at the desired level.

The strongest side of the present study was that it was one of the rare studies in disaster training, which was planned as a quasi-experimental design. Although approximately one-third of the Control Group, who had never received any training in this respect, had basic knowledge, and the disaster training provided to university students in the scope of the CWPs course was more effective was another important strength.

It was shown that disaster training provided to university students in the scope of Today's World Problems Course affects students' cognitive and behavioral attitudes towards disasters positively, and reduced the level of anxiety in the affective dimension.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In general, increasing disaster readiness is important for university students coming from different regions in terms of being aware of local and global disasters. To achieve this, it is suggested that appropriate training approaches promoted through training institutions must be made compulsory. Also, it is considered that disaster training to be provided in schools according to the levels of the relevant age groups, starting from basic training, must be provided with serious importance. In addition, more efforts should be made in the disaster preparation phase to combat disasters, awareness activities on disaster risk and harm reduction should be increased, and they should be disseminated to the whole society through public service announcements.

#### ETHICAL TEXT

In this article, journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, journal ethics rules have been followed. Responsibility for any violations that may arise regarding the article belongs to the authors. To conduct the study, the ethics committee approval was obtained on 16.03.2022 with the number 2022/02 from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Kütahya Dumlupınar University. Permission was obtained from the authors for the use of scales.

The permission of the ethics committee, the permission of the relevant institution and the permission of the authors for the use of the scale were obtained to conduct the study.

**Author(s) Contribution Rate:** In this study, the contribution rate of the author was 100%.

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