

The basic skills for responders training implementation among community fire auxiliary group members of the participating barangays in Tabuk City, Kalinga

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Abstract: This study evaluated the implementation of the Basic Skills for Responders Training (BSRT) among Community Fire Auxiliary Group (CFAG) members in Tabuk City, Kalinga. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study assessed the level of awareness, effectiveness, and challenges experienced by the CFAG members regarding their roles and training. Results showed that CFAG members demonstrated a high level of awareness and perceived the training to be effective, although certain areas such as response to localized fires and inclusivity across educational levels required improvement. The study found significant differences in awareness levels when grouped by sex, educational attainment, and employment position. Findings highlight the need for continuous capacity-building and community engagement to sustain the gains of the CFAG initiative.

Keywords: CFAG, Basic Skills for Responders Training, Community Fire Safety, Awareness, Emergency Response, Rural Fire Management

INTRODUCTION

Fire safety is important in every community because it helps protect people, homes, businesses, and the environment from the dangers of fires. It is not just about preventing fires but also being ready to handle them when they happen. According to Guevara (2024), fire safety includes steps to reduce fire risks, keep people safe, and prevent property damage. Fires can cause serious harm, including loss of life, destruction of buildings, financial problems, and environmental damage. In 2021, the US Fire Administration reported that 116,500 non-residential building fires led to 1,025 injuries and 115 deaths, showing the need for strong fire prevention and emergency response plans. Fire safety is not only about saving lives and properties, it also helps businesses stay open, ensures laws are followed, and keeps the public safe. To better prepare for fires, communities need proper training programs for emergency responders.

Having well-trained responders is very important in reducing fire risks and making sure emergencies are handled quickly and effectively. The Rural Health Information Hub (2022) explains that first responders such as firefighters, emergency medical workers, and police officers play a key role in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. Their ability to help in an emergency depends on proper training, which gives them the skills they need to handle different situations. In rural areas, where there may be fewer emergency workers, responders often have to take on different roles beyond their usual jobs. Training programs help them learn important skills like putting out fires, rescuing people, using emergency communication, and responding in a way that respects different cultures. With the right training, responders can act fast, reduce damage, save lives, and help build a safer and stronger community.

The rising number of fires in the country highlights the urgent need for local emergency response teams, particularly in areas with limited fire services. In 2024 alone, there were 18,256 fire incidents – 1,823 more than the previous year – resulting in nearly P14 billion in damage, along with an increase in injuries and fatalities (Chavez, 2025). While the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) continues to respond to emergencies, many communities, especially in rural areas, experience delays due to their distance from fire stations or the failure to report incidents promptly.

In Tabuk City, the BFP recorded 48 fire incidents in 2024, including 33 grass fires, 2 forest fires, 2 agricultural land fires, 8 structural fires, and 3 vehicular fires. With only 56 firefighters and three fire trucks, ensuring a rapid response remains a challenge. March recorded the highest number of fires, with 13 incidents. Additionally, a fire in August was only investigated but not extinguished because no call was received by the station during the incident. Recognizing these challenges, the BFP-NHQ mandated Tabuk City Fire Station to identify priority barangays for the establishment of Community Fire Auxiliary Groups (CFAG) based on fire incident frequency, population, and hazard levels determined through Vulnerability Risk Assessments.

This Community Fire Auxiliary Group is a part of the Oplan Ligtas na Pamayanan Program under its Bayanihan Program, which aims to awaken the spirit of communal unity, work and cooperation to respond to localized fire. Also to promote community safety by taking the lead in BFP-guided activities (BFP, 2023). This is a three-year

implementation program that started in January 2019, but at its peak here came the COVID-19 pandemic that disrupted all the normalcy in everyone's life. Everyone was being confined or restricted at their houses, and that made gathering impossible. This resulted in its stoppage.

But with the strong belief of the key officers of the BFP-NHQ in the power of the OLP in promoting community preparedness and fire safety, they decided to rebirth its implementation in January 2023. The BFP-NHQ then downloaded a memorandum mandating its strict implementation at every fire station in the Philippines.

Hence, from 2023 to 2024, the Tabuk City Fire Station successfully trained and formally established CFAG units in 12 barangays. In 2023, Dagupan Centro (July 22) and Bulanao Centro (August 4) were organized. By 2024, ten additional barangays – Bulanao Norte (August 30), Balong (September 2), San Julian (September 10), Ipil (September 11), Lucog (September 16), Agbannawag (September 19), Dagupan West (September 20), Magsaysay (September 25), Dilag (September 26), and Nambaran (September 27) – had established CFAG units. These trained volunteers play a crucial role in preventing fire escalation, providing immediate assistance, and enhancing community safety.

Firefighters also go through a lot during fire emergencies. They deal with exhaustion, stress, and not having enough resources while trying to save lives and properties (Lagata et al., 2022). Because of these challenges, training local fire volunteers can make a huge difference. These trained teams can act quickly, put out small fires before they spread, and support firefighters when needed. Giving them proper training, safety knowledge, and teamwork skills will help communities become better prepared and more resilient.

Due to the rising number of fire incidents in the country, the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) launched OPLAN LIGTAS NA PAMAYANAN (OLP) to strengthen community-based fire response. A key part of this effort is the Community Fire Auxiliary Group (CFAG), which helps local communities prevent and respond to fires. CFAG was created under the BAYANIHAN Program and follows the Filipino tradition of “bayanihan,” where neighbors work together for a common goal. Made up of local residents grouped by area, CFAG members act as the first responders in fire emergencies while waiting for BFP teams to arrive. They also help raise fire safety awareness with guidance from the BFP. Each CFAG group is trained and supervised by the local fire station through the assigned Bumbero sa Barangay. These groups were established as part of the Bureau of Fire Protection's (BFP) initiative to involve local communities in fire safety measures and ensure faster response times in emergency situations (Flora, 2025). With many areas in Tabuk City located far from fire stations, CFAGs help bridge the gap by providing immediate assistance before professional firefighters arrive. Their responsibilities include conducting fire prevention campaigns, assisting in emergency evacuations, and supporting BFP personnel during firefighting operations. CFAG members undergo regular training on fire suppression, safety protocols, and disaster response, allowing them to act quickly and efficiently when needed (Flora, 2025).

The evaluation from the barangay's annual assembly, conducted with the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) and partner agencies, showed that many CFAG members had forgotten the skills they learned from their one-day Basic Skills for Responders Training

(BSRT). This highlights a gap in their knowledge and ability to respond effectively to fire emergencies. Without continuous training, their role in fire prevention and response becomes less effective, putting lives and properties at risk.

The evaluation from the barangay's annual assembly, together with the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) and partner agencies, showed that many CFAG members had forgotten the skills from their Basic Skills for Responders Training (BSRT). This makes it important to check if the training is still effective in keeping them ready for fire emergencies. Assessing their knowledge and skills helps identify what they remember and what they need to improve. This information can help create better policies to strengthen community fire response systems and make sure training programs are updated to keep everyone prepared and safe.

This study aims to assess how effective the Basic Skills for Responders Training (BSRT) is in preparing Community Fire Auxiliary Group (CFAG) members for fire emergencies. It examines factors such as age, gender, education, job, and role in CFAG to understand their impact on members' awareness of responsibilities and training effectiveness. The study also explores challenges in CFAG implementation in Tabuk City and provides recommendations to improve fire response strategies, enhance training, and ensure community responders are better equipped for emergencies.

Research objectives

1. Assess the level of awareness of CFAG members regarding their designated duties and responsibilities.
2. Determine the effectiveness of the BSRT in enhancing CFAG members' knowledge and skills.
3. Identify significant differences in awareness and effectiveness based on sex, age, education, employment position, and CFAG role.
4. Evaluate challenges in the implementation of CFAG in Tabuk City.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection for the study involved both surveys and interviews to comprehensively assess the awareness and perceived effectiveness of the Barangay Safety Response Training (BSRT) among members of the Community Fire and Action Group (CFAG). The surveys were designed to gather demographic information and capture participants' ratings of training awareness, effectiveness, and challenges. Meanwhile, interviews provided deeper insights into the training's strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of its impact.

The study was conducted in 12 barangays in Tabuk City, where CFAG units had been established. A total of 300 CFAG members participated, representing a diverse group that included barangay officials, health workers, peacekeeping teams, and community volunteers. Trainers and local officials were also interviewed to provide additional perspectives and contextual information.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments, expert reviews were conducted by professionals in fire safety. A pilot study was carried out, and the resulting Cronbach's Alpha was 0.85, indicating a high level of reliability.

In terms of data analysis, descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize quantitative data. T-tests and ANOVA were employed to identify any significant differences among respondent groups. For qualitative data from interviews, thematic analysis was conducted to draw out patterns and themes relevant to the effectiveness and implementation of the training.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness of CFAG members of their roles

Findings of the study show that the CFAG members showed a high level of awareness of their roles and responsibilities. The highest rating was on their knowledge about giving first aid and helping injured people, with a mean of 4.37, showing they were very much aware of this duty. This means that during the training, first aid was clearly taught and well understood. The lowest rating was on their role to respond to fires in the barangay while waiting for the BFP team, with a mean of 4.19, which is still much aware but slightly lower than the others. This suggests that this part of their role might need more focus in future trainings.

The overall grand mean is 4.30, which means the CFAG members were very much aware of their responsibilities. These results show that the training was effective in helping members understand what they need to do during fire emergencies. However, the slightly lower awareness in responding to localized fires means there is still room to improve that part of the training. This can help ensure that members are fully prepared for all situations they may face.

The result of the study shows that CFAG members are very much aware of their roles, especially in giving first aid and helping the injured, which means that the training they received was effective. This aligns with the study of Ramadhani et al. (2023), which highlighted the important role of local volunteer groups like the self-help Fire Brigade in fire response. Although Ramadhani's study did not focus on formal training programs, the current result supports the idea that structured training—like what CFAG members received—can improve volunteer readiness in emergency situations. It fills the gap in Ramadhani's study by showing how formal training can strengthen community fire response.

Meanwhile, the study of Lee et al. (2022) points out that women often face barriers in fully participating in community disaster efforts. Although the present study did not focus on gender, the high awareness among CFAG members suggests that all trained

individuals, regardless of gender, can be effective when given equal opportunities. This supports the call of Lee et al. for more inclusive training programs, showing the importance of involving everyone in community safety.

Effectiveness of the BSRT training

Findings show how effective the Basic Skills for Responders Training was for CFAG members. Among the five areas, Skills got the highest rating with a sub mean of 4.32, which means CFAG members were very much effective in doing their tasks like giving information, helping with evacuation, rescue, first aid, and keeping the area safe. The highest individual score was the Security and Traffic Unit (4.38), showing that they did very well in controlling the fire scene and guiding emergency teams.

The lowest sub mean was in Knowledge about Fire Concepts, which got 4.11. This still means much effective but it was the lowest among the groups. This shows that while CFAG members are good at doing tasks, they need more understanding of fire basics like the parts of fire, fire classes, and how to stop fires.

The grand mean of 4.29 means that the training was overall very much effective. These results show that the training improved the members' skills and knowledge, especially in action-based tasks, but future training should focus more on basic fire knowledge for better learning.

The result shows that the Basic Skills for Responders Training was very much effective for CFAG members. They performed best in skill-based tasks like rescue, first aid, and keeping the area safe, with the Security and Traffic Unit getting the highest score. However, the lowest score was in their knowledge about fire concepts, which means they still need more understanding in that area. Overall, the training helped a lot, but future sessions should focus more on basic fire knowledge.

This connects with the study of Madriaga (2024), who looked at the Oplan Ligtas na Pamayanan program in Baguio City. Like the current study, Madriaga found that the training was effective and participants were satisfied, but there were also areas that needed improvement. In both studies, the goal was to check if community responders have the needed skills and to find what parts of the training should be improved. Just as Madriaga pointed out gaps in resources and participation, this study shows that more attention is needed in teaching fire basics to strengthen the overall effectiveness of the program.

Challenges in CFAG implementation

When challenges were considered, the highest mean score is "The time allotted for the training was insufficient," with a mean of 3.42, interpreted as agree. This means that most respondents felt the training duration was not enough to cover all needed content and practice. The lowest score was 1.92 for the item "The community educators did not deliver their lectures and demonstrations clearly and excellently," interpreted as disagree, which suggests that the respondents were generally satisfied with the delivery of lectures and demonstrations.

The grand mean of 2.91 falls under neutral, indicating that while there were some concerns, most of the challenges were not strongly felt by the majority. However, the

agreement on time insufficiency highlights a specific area for improvement. Other items, such as budget concerns, unclear participant guidelines, and lack of materials for unconventional firefighting, were rated as neutral, suggesting mixed opinions among the participants. These results imply that while the CFAG program was generally acceptable, improvements in training duration and clearer guidelines may help enhance its implementation.

The result shows that the main problem in the CFAG training in Tabuk City was the short time given for the sessions. Many members said the time was not enough to learn and practice everything they needed. Still, most members were happy with how the trainers taught them. The overall response was neutral, meaning the challenges were there but not too serious for most members. But the concern about short training time, and the neutral views on budget, materials, and clear instructions, suggest that these areas need to be improved.

This matches the study of Amri et al. (2017), which said that disaster training in Indonesia also had problems like not enough money, unclear training, and weak support. The same problems may be happening in Tabuk City. Just like in their study, this result shows that for CFAG training to work better, there should be more time, better guidance, and enough support. This will help CFAG members be more ready to help during emergencies.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Basic Skills for Responders Training (BSRT) significantly improved CFAG members' awareness and preparedness for fire emergencies in Tabuk City. However, disparities in training effectiveness across demographic groups indicate a need for more inclusive and sustained training programs. The findings support the importance of localized, community-based fire response systems and recommend further investment in refresher courses, resource allocation, and collaborative policy-making to enhance the sustainability of CFAG initiatives.

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