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# Public perception of the risk of disasters in a developing economy: the case of Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

Saudi Arabia has in recent years experienced frequent disasters, including flooding, epidemics, and dust storms, while many parts of the country are subject to regular earthquake and volcanic activity. The paper examines public perception of the risk of disasters in this interesting socio-cultural and regional environment not already covered by existing literature. A wide national survey conducted between March and May 2012 resulted in 1,164 responses across the 13 regions of Saudi Arabia. The study showed that the majority of the participants have faith that God is in control of the world and that disasters may be a punishment from him. However, this does not hinder their desire to be prepared to cope with disasters. It also highlighted that direct experience with such disasters does not directly influence perception. The research findings lead to the emergence of a number of recommendations regarding raising awareness of hazards and the risk of disasters, including education, training, encouraging voluntary work, and improving public access to vital information resources. A requirement for research into resilience also emerges, to prepare communities to cope with disasters; this is the focus of the authors' future research.



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**Public perception of the risk of disasters in a developing economy: the case of Saudi Arabia**

Saad Ali Alhakeel · Yassin Razaqat · Hajiang Li

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**Abstract** Saudi Arabia has in recent years experienced frequent disasters, including flooding, epidemics, and dust storms, while many parts of the country are subject to regular earthquakes and volcanic activity. The paper examines public perception of the risk of disasters in this interesting socio-cultural and regional environment not already covered by existing literature. A wide national survey conducted between March and May 2012 resulted in 1,564 responses across the 13 regions of Saudi Arabia. The study showed that the majority of the participants have faith that God is in control of the world and that disasters may be a punishment from him. However, the data also indicate that those who are prepared to cope with disasters. It also highlighted that direct experience with such disasters does not directly influence perception. The research findings lead to the emergence of a number of recommendations regarding raising awareness of hazards and the risk of disasters, including education, training, encouraging voluntary work, and improving public access to vital information resources. A requirement for research into resilience also emerges, to prepare communities to cope with disasters, this is the focus of the authors' future research.

**Keywords** Disasters · Hazards · Public perception · Saudi Arabia

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