

The Role of Youth Organizations in Disaster Management in the Himachal Himalayas: A Study of the NCC and NSS During the Mandi Disasters (2023–2025), with a Special Reference to Media Discourse

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Abstract

This research paper provides an academic evaluation of the role of the **National Cadet Corps (NCC)** and the **National Service Scheme (NSS)** in the context of natural disasters—heavy rainfall, landslides, cloudbursts, and floods—that occurred in the Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh between 2023 and 2025. During this period, these disasters not only caused significant damage to life and property but also challenged social and administrative systems. In these circumstances, youth organizations made a notable contribution to relief, rehabilitation, and awareness activities. The research adopted a **qualitative methodology**, which included interviews with disaster victims, administrative officials, and cadets. It also analysed reports from newspapers, TV channels, social media, and the District Disaster Management Authority. The findings of the study indicate that the NCC and NSS set a new precedent in the field of disaster management by demonstrating **discipline, selfless service, and leadership**. The media discourse gave their work widespread praise and presented "youth power" as a symbol of nation-building. In conclusion, it is clear that if these organizations are formally integrated into the disaster management framework with more resources and training, they can make a significant contribution not only to immediate relief efforts but also to long-term rehabilitation and disaster risk reduction.

key words: National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS), Disaster Management, Youth Organizations, Mandi district, Himachal Pradesh, Natural Disasters (specifically heavy rainfall, landslides, cloudbursts, floods), Relief, Rehabilitation, Awareness, Qualitative methodology, Media discourse, Youth power, Disaster risk reduction

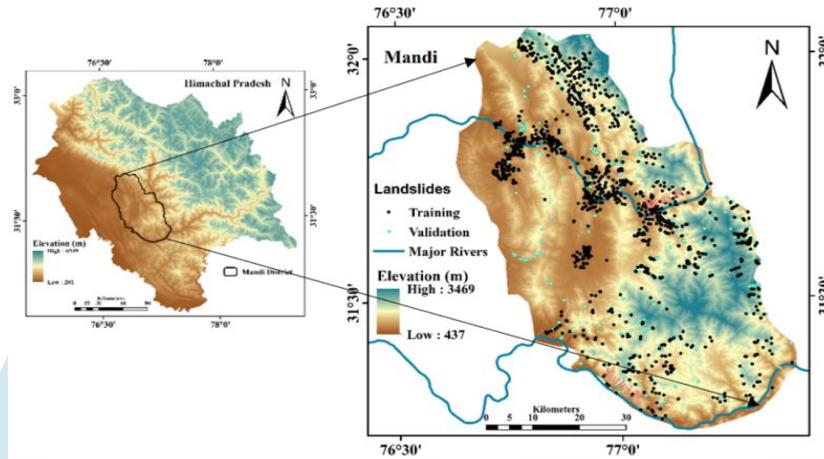
Introduction

Background of Natural Disasters in India

India's geographical location places it among the most disaster-prone countries in the world. The Himalayan states, particularly Uttarakhand, Himachal, and Jammu & Kashmir, are considered vulnerable to disasters like landslides, cloudbursts, and earthquakes. The Kedarnath disaster of 2013 and the Chamoli disaster of 2021 proved that climate change and unregulated construction activities are increasing the intensity of these disasters.

Disaster Situation in Himachal Pradesh (2023–2025)

Between June 2023 and September 2025, Himachal Pradesh, especially the Mandi district, was repeatedly hit by natural disasters. There were cloudbursts in 28 locations, flash floods and landslides in 45 places, 276 deaths, and more than 300 people injured. Property damage exceeded ₹3,000 crore, and hundreds of roads were blocked, isolating villages.



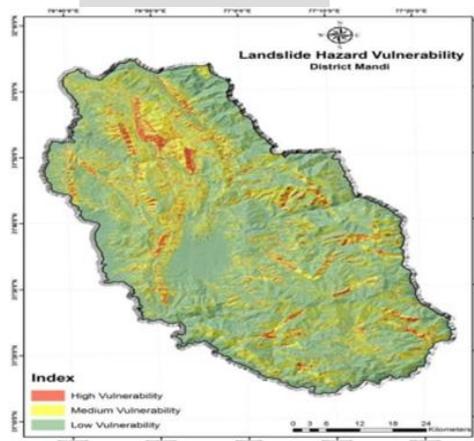
Source: HPSDMA, Landslide Inventory & Hazard Zonation Maps, Himachal Pradesh, 2023.

The Importance of Youth Participation

In such crises, when administrative resources are limited, the enthusiasm and spirit of service of youth organizations become the backbone of disaster management. The NCC and NSS were formed not only for discipline and social responsibility but also to support society during a crisis.

Context of the Mandi Disaster

Geographically, the Mandi district is a sensitive area. It was the most affected by the natural disasters of 2023–2025. Here, the NCC and NSS played an active role in relief and rehabilitation efforts, supporting the administration and local communities.



Source: HPSDMA, Landslide Inventory & Hazard Zonation Maps, Himachal Pradesh, 2023.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

1. **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Model:** Emphasizes the importance of community initiatives in reducing disaster risks.

2. **Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM):** Promotes the participation of local communities and volunteers in disaster management.

Global and National Perspectives

- **UNDRR (2020)** identified community participation as the most effective measure.
- **NDMA (2022)** guidelines recognize the NCC and NSS as auxiliary organizations.

Previous Research

- **Kashyap (2018):** The role of NSS volunteers in relief camps.
- **Sharma (2020):** The role of the media in disaster management.
- **Verma (2022):** Challenges faced by youth in Himalayan regions.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Objectives

1. To evaluate the role of the NCC and NSS in the Mandi disaster.
2. To analyse their methods and effectiveness.
3. To understand their representation in media discourse.
4. To propose policy suggestions.

Hypotheses

1. The NCC and NSS made a significant contribution to disaster relief and rehabilitation.
2. Media coverage presented a positive image of the youth.
3. A lack of resources and training limits their impact.

Research Methodology

Research Design: Qualitative and descriptive. **Primary Sources:** Interviews with cadets, disaster victims, and administrative officials. **Secondary Sources:** Newspapers, TV reports, social media, and government documents. **Period and Area:** Mandi district, 2023–2025.

Analysis and Discussion

Nature of the Mandi Disaster

The Mandi district was the epicentre of the disasters from 2023–2025. Villages were cut off, bridges collapsed, and roads were blocked. In this situation, the local administration could not work alone.

Role of the NCC

- **Leadership and Coordination:** Under the leadership of Flying Officer Dr. Chaman Lal, coordination was established with the Air Force and the administration.
- **Relief and Logistics:** Over 700 relief kits were prepared and delivered to affected areas by helicopters.
- **Community Support:** Food, water, and tarpaulins were provided to stranded tourists and villagers.
- **Humanitarian Experience:** Cadet Aman Chauhan directly experienced the tragedy of the cloudburst in Thana village and remained involved in the relief work.

Role of the NSS

- **"Seva for Siraj" Campaign:** Raised ₹53,000 for flood-affected villages.
- **Distribution and Survey:** Distributed relief materials in villages like Jarol Road, Ral Chowk, and Pandav Shila.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Ran community kitchens and education camps for displaced families.

Media Discourse

- **Newspapers and TV:** Described the NCC/NSS as a symbol of "**youth power**" and "**national service**."
- **Social media:** Pictures and videos of the cadets went viral.
- **Policy Debate:** The media discourse raised the question of whether these organizations should be permanently integrated into the formal disaster management framework.

Challenges

- Lack of training and resources.
- Need for professional support in psychosocial assistance.
- Initial hurdles in administrative coordination.

Conclusion

The study clearly shows that the NCC and NSS provided disciplined, selfless, and effective service during the Mandi disaster. The media presented their work positively, which helped to form an image of the youth as being involved in "**nation-building**" and as a source of "**youth power**." If the government and policymakers include these organizations in the formal disaster management framework with proper training, resources, and technical support, their role will be even more effective in the future.

Policy Suggestions

- **Formal Integration:** The NCC and NSS should be included in the structure of the State Disaster Management Authority.
- **Training Programs:** Regular disaster management and psychological first-aid training should be provided.
- **Resource Availability:** Relief materials, logistics, and communication equipment should be made available.
- **Media Collaboration:** The positive stories of these organizations should be given more space in the media.
- **Academic Incentives:** Cadets participating in disaster management should receive academic and professional benefits.

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