Learning in an Interactive Simulation Tool against Landslide Risks: The Role of Strength and Availability of Experiential Feedback

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Abstract. Feedback via simulation tools is likely to help people improve their decision-making against natural disasters, however, currently little is known on how differing strengths of experiential feedback and feedback's availability in simulation tools influences people's decisions against landslides. In an experiment involving participants, we tested the influence of differing strengths of experiential feedback and feedback's availability on people's decisions against landslide risks in an Interactive Landslide Simulation (ILS) tool. Experiential feedback (high or low) and feedback's availability (present or absent) were varied across four between-subject conditions: high-damage feedback-present, high-damage feedback-absent, low-damage feedback-present, and low-damage feedback-absent. In high-damage conditions, the probabilities of damages to life and property due to landslides were 10-times higher than those in the low-damage conditions. In feedback-present conditions, experiential feedback was provided in numeric, text, and graphical formats in ILS. In feedback-absent conditions, the probabilities of damages were described, however, there was no experiential feedback present. Investments were greater in conditions where experiential feedback was present and damages were high compared to conditions where experiential feedback was absent and damages were low. Furthermore, only high-damage feedback produced learning in ILS. Simulation tools like ILS seem appropriate for landslide risk communication and for performing what-if analyses.

1 Introduction

Landslides cause massive damages to life and property worldwide (Chaturvedi and Dutt, 2015; Margottini et al., 2011). Imparting knowledge about landslide causes-and-consequences as well as spreading awareness about landslide disaster mitigation are likely to be effective ways of managing landslide risks. The former approach supports structural protection measures that are likely to help people take mitigation actions and reduce the probability of landslides (Becker et al., 2013; Osuret et al., 2016; Webb and Ronan, 2014). In contrast, the latter approach likely reduces people's and assets' perceived vulnerability to risk. However, it does not influence the physical processes. One needs effective landslide risk communication systems (RCSs) to educate people about cause-and-effect relationships concerning landslides (Glade et al., 2005). To be effective, these RCSs should possess five main components (Rogers and Tsirkunov, 2011): monitoring; analysing, risk communication, warning dissemination, and capacity building.

Among these components, prior research has focused on monitoring and analysing the occurrence of landslide events (Dai et al., 2002; Montrasio et al., 2011). For example, there exist various statistical and process-based models for predicting landslides (Dai et al., 2002; Montrasio et al., 2011). Several satellite-based and sensor-based landslide monitoring systems are being used in landslide RCSs (Hong et al., 2006; Quanshah et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2011). To be effective, however, landslide RCSs need not only be based upon sound scientific models, but, they also need to consider human factors, i.e., the knowledge and understanding of people residing in landslide-prone areas (Meissen and Voisard, 2008). Thus, there is an urgent need to focus on the development, evaluation, and improvement of risk communication, warning dissemination, and capacity building measures in RCSs.

Improvements in risk communication strategies are likely to help people understand the cause-and-effect processes concerning landslides and help them improve their decision-making against these natural disasters (Grasso and Singh, 2009). However, surveys conducted among communities in landslide-prone areas (including those in northern India) have shown a lack of awareness and understanding among people about landslide risks (Chaturvedi and Dutt, 2015; Oven, 2009; Wanasolo, 2012). In a survey conducted in Mandi, India, Chaturvedi and Dutt (2015) found that 60% of people surveyed were not able to answer questions on landslide susceptibilities maps, which were prepared by experts. Also, Chaturvedi and Dutt (2015) found that a sizeable population reported landslides to be "acts of God" (39%) and attributed activities like "shifting of temple" as causing landslides (17%). These results are surprising as the literacy-rate in Mandi and surrounding areas is quite high (81.5%) (Census, 2011) and these results show numerous misconceptions about landslides among people in landslide-prone areas. Overall, urgent measures need to be taken that improve public understanding and awareness about landslides in affected areas.

Promising recent research has shown that experiential feedback in simulation tools likely helps improve public understanding about dynamics of physical systems (Chaturvedi et al., 2017; Dutt and Gonzalez, 2010; 2011; 2012; Fischer, 2008). Dutt and Gonzalez (2012) developed a Dynamic Climate Change Simulator (DCCS) tool, which was based upon a more generic stock-and-flow task (Gonzalez and Dutt, 2011a). The authors provided frequent feedback on cause-and-effect relationships concerning Earth's climate in DCCS and this experiential feedback helped people reduce their climate misconceptions compared to a no-DCCS intervention. Although the prior literature has investigated the role of frequency of feedback about inputs and outputs in physical systems, yet little is known on how differing strengths of experiential feedback (i.e., differing probabilities of damages due to landslides) influences people's decisions over time. Also, little is known on how experiential feedback's availability (presence or absence) in simulation tools influences people's decisions.

The main goal of this paper is to evaluate how differing strengths of experiential feedback and feedback's availability influences people's mitigation decisions. It is important to understand how differing experiential feedback in terms of differing probabilities of landslide damages influences people's mitigation decisions. That is because the experience of landslide consequences could range from no damages to large damages involving several injuries, infrastructure damages, and deaths. Thus, some people may experience severe damages and consider landslides to be a serious problem requiring immediate actions, whereas, other people may experience no damages and consider landslides to be a trivial problem requiring very little attention.

In addition, the availability of feedback in simulation tools is also likely to influence people's decisions against landslides. When feedback is absent, people are likely only to acquire descriptive knowledge about the cause-and-effect relationships governing the landslide dynamics (Dutt and Gonzalez, 2010). However, when feedback is present, people get to repeatedly experience the positive or negative consequences of their decisions against landslide risks (Dutt and Gonzalez, 2010; 2011). This repeated experience will likely help people understand the cause-and-effect relationships governing the landslide dynamics.

Chaturvedi et al. (2017) proposed a computer-simulation tool, called the Interactive Landslide Simulator (ILS). The ILS tool is based upon a landslide model that considers the influence of both human factors and physical factors on landslide dynamics. Thus, in ILS, both physical factors (e.g., spatial geology and rainfall) and human factors (e.g., monetary contributions to mitigate landslides) influence the probability of catastrophic landslides. In a preliminary investigation involving the ILS tool, Chaturvedi et al. (2017) varied the probability of damages due to landslides at two levels: low probability and high probability. The high probability was set about 10-times higher compared to the low probability. People were asked to make monetary investment decisions, where the monetary payment would be used for mitigating landslides (e.g., by building a retaining wall or by planting crops with long roots in landslide-prone areas). People's investments were significantly greater when the damage probability was high compared to when this probability was low. However, Chaturvedi et al. (2017) did not fully evaluate the effectiveness of experiential feedback of damages in ILS tool against control conditions where this experiential feedback was not present. Also, Chaturvedi et al. (2017) did not investigate people's investment decisions over time and certain strategies in ILS, where these decisions and strategies would be indicative of learning of landslide dynamics in the tool.

Prior literature on learning from experiential feedback (Baumeister et al., 2007; Dutt and Gonzalez, 2012; Finucane et al., 2000; Knutty, 2005; Reis and Judd, 2013; Wagner, 2007) suggests that increasing the strength of damage feedback by increasing the probabilities of landslide damages in simulation tools would likely increase people's mitigation decisions. That is because a high probability of landslide damages will make people suffer monetary losses and people would tend to minimize these losses by increasing their mitigation actions over time. It is also expected that the presence of experiential feedback about damages in simulation tools is likely to increase people's landslide-mitigation actions over time (Dutt and Gonzalez, 2010; 2011; 2012). That is because the experiential feedback about damages will likely enable people to make decisions and see the consequences of their decisions, however, the absence of this feedback will not allow people to observe the consequences of their decisions once these decisions have been made (Dutt and Gonzalez, 2012). At first glance, these explanations may seem to assume people to be economically rationale individuals while facing landslide disasters (Bossaerts and Murawski, 2015; Neumann and Morgenstern, 1947), where one disregards people's bounded rationality, risk perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours (De Martino, Kumaran, Seymour, and Dolan; 2005; Gigerenzer and Selten, 2002; Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Simon, 1959; Slovic, Peters, Finucane, and MacGregor, 2005; Thaler and Sunstein, 2008; Tversky and Kahneman, 1992). However, in this paper, we consider people to be bounded rational agents (Gigerenzer and Selten, 2002; Simon, 1959), who tend to minimize their losses against landslides slowly over time via a trial-and-error learning process driven by personal experience in an uncertain environment (Dutt and Gonzalez, 2010; Slovic et al., 2005).

In this paper, we evaluate the influence of differing strengths of experiential feedback about landslide-related damages and the experiential feedback's availability in the ILS tool. More specifically, we test whether people increase their mitigation actions in the presence of experiential damage feedback compared to in the absence of this feedback. In addition, we evaluate how different probabilities of damages influence people's mitigation actions in the ILS tool. Furthermore, we also analyse people's mitigation actions over time across different conditions.

In what follows, first, we detail a computational model on landslide risks that considers the role of both human factors and physical factors. Next, we detail the working of the ILS tool, i.e., based on the landslide model. Furthermore, we use the ILS tool in an experiment to evaluate the influence of differing strengths of experiential feedback and feedback's availability on people's decisions. Finally, we close this paper by discussing our results and detailing the benefits of using tools like ILS for communicating landslide risks in the real world.

2 Computational model of landslide risk

Chaturvedi et al. (2017) had proposed a computational model for simulating landslide risks that was based upon the integration of human and physical factors (see Figure 1). Here, we briefly detail this model and use it in the ILS tool for our experiment (reported ahead). As seen in Figure 1, the probability of landslides due to human factors in the ILS tool is adapted from a model suggested by Hasson et al. (2010) (see box 1.1 in Figure 1). In Hasson et al. (2010)'s model, the probability of a disaster (e.g., landslide) due to human factors (e.g., investment) was a function of the cumulative monetary contributions made by participants to avert the disaster from the total endowment available to participants. Thus, investing against the disaster in mitigation measures reduces the probability of the disaster and not investing in mitigation measures increases the probability of the disaster.[1]

Furthermore, in the landslide model, the probability of landslides due to physical (natural) factors (see box 1.2) is a function of the prevailing rainfall conditions and the nature of geology in the area (Mathew et al., 2013).[2] As shown in Figure 1, the ILS model focuses on calculation of total probability of landslide (due to physical and human factors) (box 1.3). This total probability of landslide is calculated as a weighted sum of probability of landslide due to physical factors and probability of landslide due to human factors. Furthermore, the model simulates different types of damages caused by landslides and their effects on people's earnings (box 1.4).

[1] Although we assume this model to incorporate human mitigation actions in the ILS tool, there may also be other model assumptions possible where certain detrimental human actions (e.g., deforestation) may increase the probability of landslides or the risk (probability * consequence) of landslides. We plan to consider these model assumptions as part of our future research. In addition, there may be contributions made the national, regional, and local governments for providing protection measures against landslides in addition to the investments made by people residing in the area. In this paper, however, we restrict our analyses to only people's investments influencing landslides. We plan to consider the role of governments as part of our future research.

[2] We restrict our focus to considering only weather (rainfall)-induced landslides.

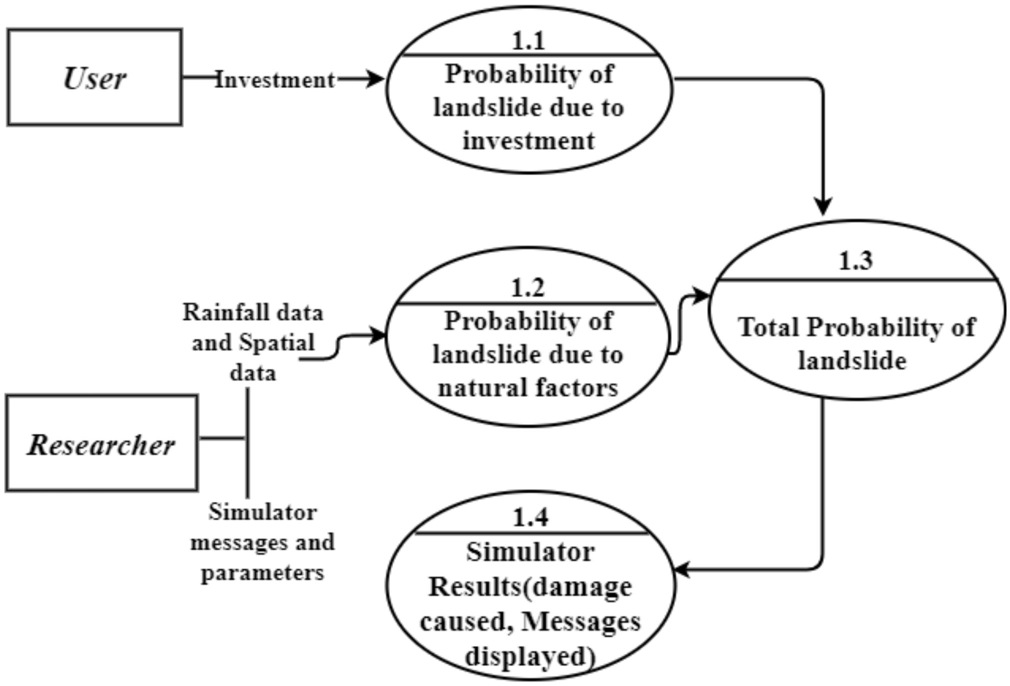


Figure 1. Probabilistic model of the Interactive Landslide Simulator tool. Figure adapted from Chaturvedi et al. (2017).

2.1 Total probability of landslides

As described by Chaturvedi et al. (2017), the total probability of landslides is a function of landslide probabilities due to human factors and physical factors. This total probability of landslides can be represented as the following:

$$P(T) = \left(W * P\ (I) + \ (1 - W) * P\ (E)\right) \quad (1)$$

Where W is a free weight parameter in [0, 1]. The total probability formula involves calculation of two probabilities, probability of landslide due to human investments (*P(I)*) and probability of landslide due to physical factors (*P(E)*). These probabilities have been defined below. According to Equation 1, the total probability of landslides will change based upon both human decisions and environmental factors over time. A landslide occurs when a uniformly distributed random number (~ *U(0, 1)*) became less than or equal to *P(T)* on a certain day in the ILS tool. [3]

2.1.1 Probability of landslide due to human investments (*P(I)*)

As suggested by Chaturvedi et al. (2017), this probability is calculated using the probability model suggested by Hasson et al. (2010). In this model, P(I) is directly proportional to the amount of money invested by participants for landslide mitigation. The probability of landslide due to human investments is:

$$P(I) = 1 - \frac{M * \sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i}{n * B} \quad (2)$$

Where,

[3] If a uniformly distributed random number in [0, 1] (*U (0, 1)*) is less than a probability value, then it simulates this probability value. For example, if *U (0, 1)* < 30%, then *U(0, 1)* will be less than the 30% value exactly 30% of the total number of times it is simulated and thus this process will simulate a 30% probability value.

B = Budget available towards addressing landslides for a day (if a person earns an income or salary, then B is the same as this income or salary earned in a day).

n = Number of days.

x_i = Investments made by a person for each day i to mitigate landslides; $x_i \leq B$.

M = Return to Mitigation, which is a free parameter and captures the lower bound probability of *P(I)*, i.e., *P (I) = 1-M* when a person puts her entire budget B into landslide mitigation ($\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i = n * B$); $0 \leq M \leq 1$.

People's monetary investments (x_i) are for mitigation measures like building retaining walls or planting long root crops.

2.1.2 Probability of landslide due to physical factors (*P(E)*)

Some of the physical factors impacting landslides include rainfall, soil type, and slope profile (Chaturvedi et al., 2017; Dai et al., 2002). These factors can be categorized into two parts:

1. Probability of landslide due to rainfall (*P(R)*)
2. Probability of landslide due to soil type and slope profile (spatial probability, *P(S)*)

For the sake of simplicity, we have assumed that spatial probability of landslide is independent of the triggering probability of landslide due to rainfall. Given *P(R)* and *P(S)*, the probability of landslide due to physical factors, *P(E)* is defined as:

$$P(E) = P(R) * P(S) \quad (3)$$

The methodology adopted here comprises of two steps. In the first step, *P(R)* is calculated based upon a logistic-regression model (Mathew et al., 2013) as follows:

$$P(R) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-z}} \quad (4a)$$

And,

$$z = -3.817 + (DR) * 0.077 + (3DCR) * 0.058 + (30DAR) * 0.009$$

$$z: (-\infty, +\infty) \quad (4b)$$

Where, the DR, $3DCR$, and $30DAR$ is the daily rainfall, the 3-day cumulative rainfall, and the 30-day antecedent rainfall. This model in equations 4a and 4b was developed for the study area by Mathew et al. (2013) and we have used the same model in this paper. The rainfall parameters in the model were calculated from the daily rain data from the Indian Metrological Department (IMD). Five years of daily rain data (2010-14) from IMD was averaged to find the average rainfall values on each day out of the 365 days in a year. Next, these averaged rainfall values were put into equations 4a and 4b to generate the landslide probability due to rainfall (P(R)) over an entire year. Figure 4 shows the shape of P(R) as a function of days in the year for the study area. Given the monsoon period in India during July – September, there is a peak in the P(R) distribution curve during these months. Depending upon the start date in the ILS tool, one could read P(R) values from Figure 2 as the probability of landslides due to rainfall on a certain date. This P(R) function was assumed to possess the same shape across all participants in the ILS tool.

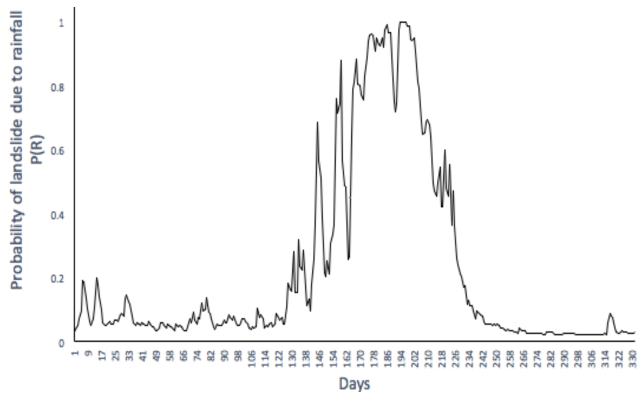


Figure 2: Probability of landslide due to rainfall over days for the study area. The probability was generated by using equations 4a and 4b.

The second step is to evaluate the spatial probability of landslides, *P(S)*. The determination of *P(S)* is done from Landslide Susceptibility Zonation (LSZ) map of the area (Anbalagan, 1992; Chaturvedi et al., 2017; Clerici et al., 2002), which are based on various causative factors for landslides (such as geological, geometry, geomorphological factors) in the study area. The spatial probability is computed based upon the Total Estimated Hazard (THED) rating of different locations on a LSZ map and their surface area of coverage (the maximum possible value of THED is 11.0 and its minimum possible value is 0.0). Table 1 provides the THED scale to report the susceptibility of an area to landslides (Anbalagan, 1992).

Table 1. Total Estimated Hazard (THED) scale for evaluating the susceptibility of an area to landslides

Hazard Zone	Range of corrected THED	Description of zone
I	THED < 3.5	Very low hazard (VLH) zone
II	3.5 ≤ THED < 5.0	Low hazard (LH) zone
III	5.0 ≤ THED ≤ 6.5	Moderate hazard (MH) zone
IV	6.5 < THED ≤ 8.0	High Hazard (HH) zone
V	THED > 8.0	Very high hazard (VHH) zone

First, from Table 1, the critical THED values (e.g., 3.5, 5.0, 6.5, and 8.0) were converted into a probability value by dividing with the highest THED value (= 11.0). Next, we used the LSZ map of the study area to find the surface area that was under a specific THED value and used this area to determine the cumulative probability density function for *P(S)*. For example, if a THED of 3.5 has a 20% coverage area on LSZ, then the spatial probability is less than equal to 0.32 (=3.5/11.0) with a 20% chance. Similarly, if a THED of 5.0 has a 30% coverage area on LSZ, then the then the spatial probability is less than equal to 0.45 (=5.0/11.0) with a 50% chance (30% + 20%). Such calculations enabled us to develop a cumulative density function for *P(S)*. In the ILS tool, a participant was assumed to belong to a location in the study area and this study area determined the *P(S)* value. This *P(S)* value stayed the same for this participant across her performance in the ILS tool.

2.1.3 Damages due to landslides

As suggested by Chaturvedi et al. (2017), the damages caused by landslides were classified into three independent categories: property loss, injury, and fatality. These categories have their own damage probabilities. When a landslide occurs, it could be benign or catastrophic. A landslide becomes catastrophic when any of the three independent random numbers (~ *U(0, 1)*) become less than or equal to the corresponding damage probability of property loss, injury, and fatality. Once the random number is less than the probability of the corresponding damage, the damage occurs. Landslide damages have different effects on the player's wealth and income, where damage to property affects one's property wealth and damages concerning injury and fatality affect one's income level. When the landslide is benign, then there is no injury, fatality, or damage to property. The exact assumptions about damages are detailed ahead in this manuscript.

3 Interactive Landslide Simulator (ILS) tool

The ILS tool[4] (Chaturvedi et al., 2017) is a web-based tool and it is based upon the ILS model described above. The ILS tool allows participants to make repeated monetary investment decisions for landslide risk-mitigation, observe the consequences of their decisions via feedback, and try new investment decisions. This way, ILS helps improve people's understanding about the causes and consequences of landslides. The ILS tool can run for different time periods, which could be from days to months to years. This feature can be customized in the ILS tool. In this paper, we have assumed a daily time-scale to make it match the daily probability of landslides computed in equations 4a and 4b.

The goal in ILS tool is to maximize one's total wealth, where this wealth is influenced by one's income, property wealth, and losses experienced due to landslides. Landslides and corresponding losses are influenced by physical factors (spatial and temporal probabilities of landslides) and human factors (i.e., the past contributions made by a participant for landslide mitigation). The total wealth may decrease (by damages caused by landslides, like injury, death, and property damage) or increase (due to daily income). While interacting with the tool, the repeated feedback on the positive or negative consequences of their decisions on their income and property wealth enables participants to revise their decisions and learn landslide risks and dynamics over time.

Figure 3 represents graphical user interface of ILS tool's investment screen. On this screen, participants are asked to make monetary mitigation decisions up to their daily income upper bound (see Box A). The total wealth is a sum of income not invested for landslide mitigation, property wealth, and total damages due to landslides (see Box B). As shown in Box B, participants are also shown the different probabilities of landslide due to human and physical factors as well as the probability weight used to combine these probabilities into the total probability. Furthermore, as shown in Box C, participants are graphically shown the history of total probability of landslide, total income not invested in landslides, and their remaining property wealth across different days.

[4] The ILS tool was coded in open-source programming languages PHP and MySQL and it is freely available for use at the following URL: www.pratik.acslab.org

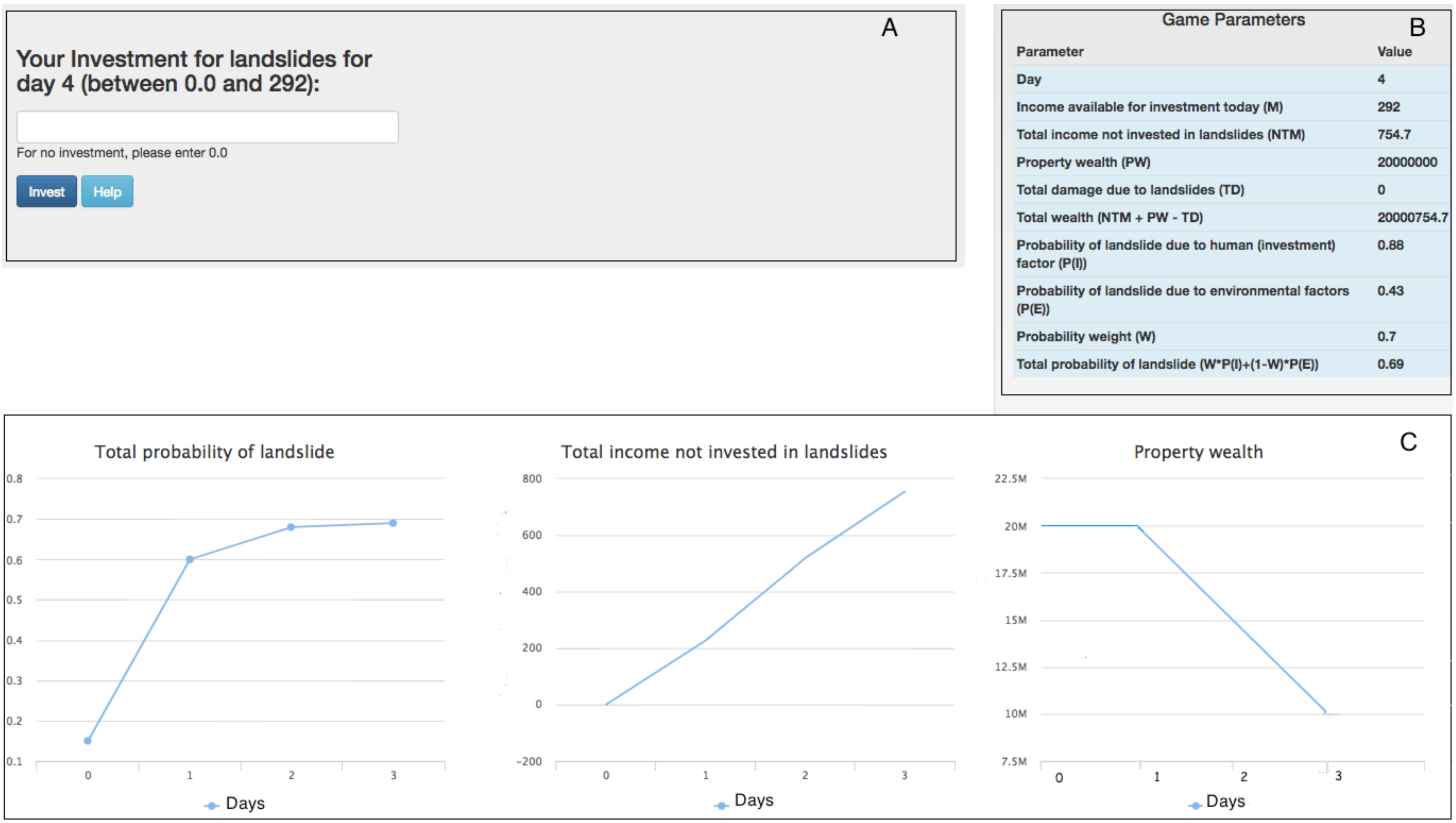
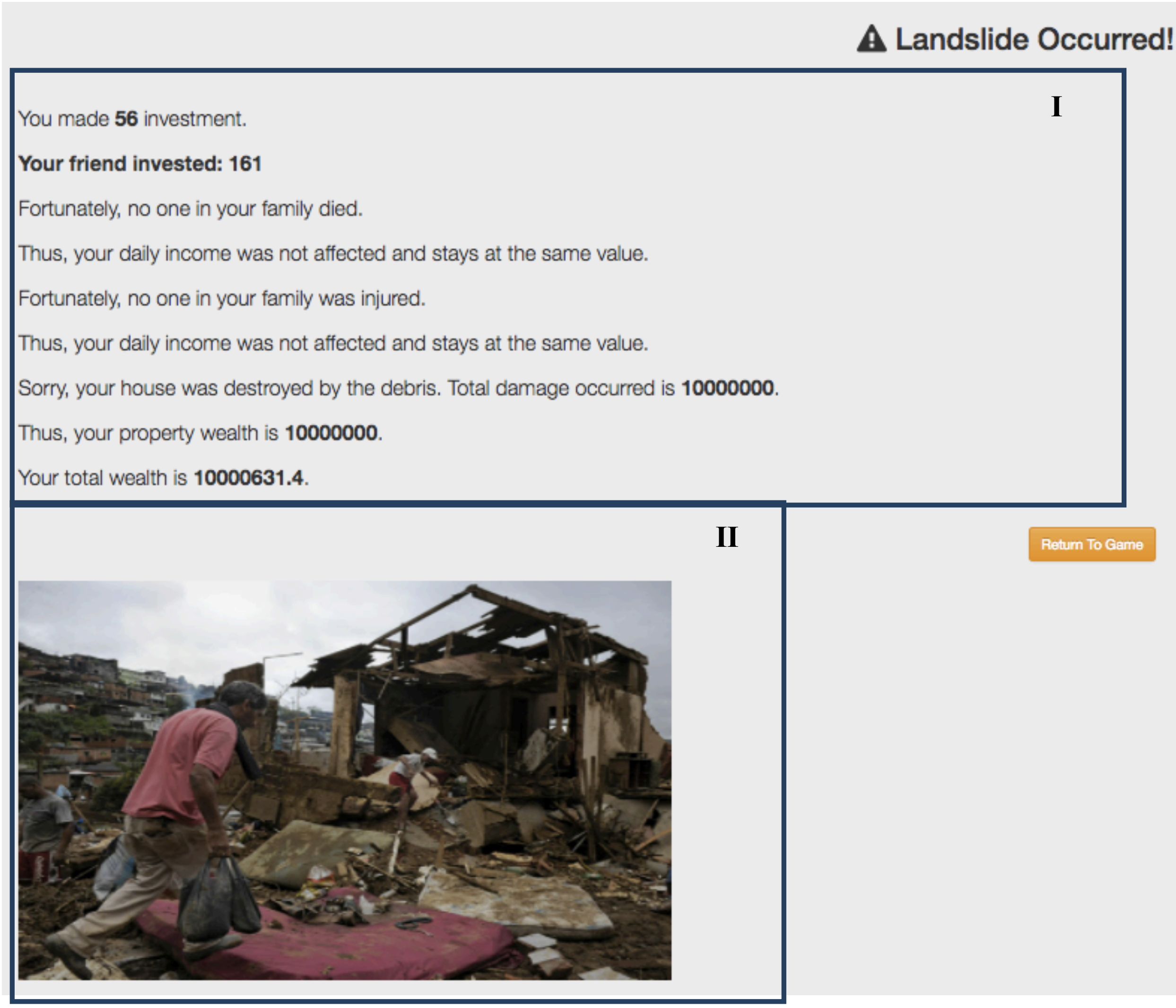


Figure 3. ILS tool's Investment Screen. Box **(A):** The text box where participants made investments against landslides. Box **(B):** The tool's different parameters and their values. Box **(C):** Line graphs showing the total probability of landslide, the total income not invested in landslides, and the property wealth over days. Horizontal axes in these graphs represents number of days. The goal was to maximize Total Wealth across a number of days of performance in the ILS tool. This figure is adapted from Chaturvedi et al. (2017).

As described above, participants, i.e., common people residing in the study area, could invest between zero (minimum) and player's current daily income (maximum). Once the investment is made, participants need to click the "Invest" button. Upon clicking the Invest button, participants enter the experiential feedback screen where they can observe whether a landslide occurred or not and whether there were changes in the daily income, property wealth, and damages due to the landslide (see Figure 4). As discussed above, the landslide occurrence was determined by the comparison of a uniformly distributed random number in [0, 1] with *P(T)*. If a uniformly distributed random number in [0, 1] was less than or equal to *P(T)*, then a landslide occurred; otherwise, the landslide did not occur. Furthermore, if the landslide occurred, then three uniformly distributed random numbers in [0, 1] were compared with the probability of injury, fatality, and property damage, respectively. If the values of any of these random numbers were less than or equal to the corresponding injury, fatality, or property-damage probabilities, then the landslide was catastrophic (i.e., causing injury, fatality, or property damage; all three events could occur simultaneously). In contrast, if the random numbers were more than the corresponding injury, fatality, and property-damage probabilities, then the landslide was benign (i.e., it did not cause injury, fatality, and property damage). As shown in Figure 4 (A), feedback information is presented in three formats: monetary information about total wealth (box I), messages about different losses (box I), and imagery corresponding to losses (box II). Injury and fatality due to landslides causes a decrease in the daily income and damage to property causes a loss of property wealth (the exact loss proportions are detailed ahead). If a landslide does not occur in a certain trial, a positive feedback screen is shown to the decision maker (see Figure 4 B). The user can get back to investment decision screen by clicking on "Return to Game" button on the feedback screen.

(A) Negative Feedback



(B) Positive Feedback

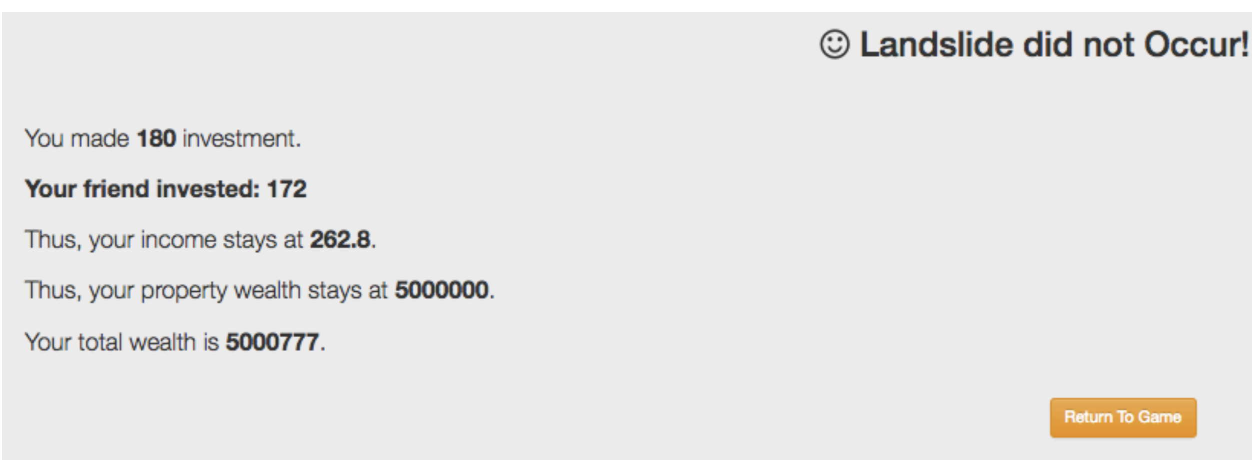


Figure 4. ILS tool's feedback screens. **(A)** Negative feedback when a landslide occurred. Box (I) contains the loss in terms of magnitude and messages and Box (II) contains associated imagery. **(B)** Positive feedback when a landslide did not occur.

4 Methods

To test the effectiveness of strength and availability of feedback, we performed a laboratory experiment involving human participants where we compared performance in the ILS tool in the presence or absence of experiential feedback about different damage probabilities. Based upon prior literature (Baumeister et al., 2007; Dutt and Gonzalez, 2012; Finucane et al., 2000; Knutty, 2005; Reis and Judd, 2013; Wagner, 2007), we expected the proportion of investments to be higher in the presence of experiential feedback compared to those in the absence of experiential feedback. Furthermore, we expected higher investments against landslides when feedback was more damaging in ILS compared to when it was less damaging (Chaturvedi et al., 2017; Dutt and Gonzalez, 2011; Gonzalez and Dutt, 2011a).

4.1 Experimental Design

Eighty-three participants were randomly assigned across four between-subjects conditions in the ILS tool, where the conditions differed in the strength of experiential feedback (high-damage (N= 40) or low-damage (N= 43)) and availability of feedback (feedback-present (N= 43) or feedback-absent (N= 40)) provided after every mitigation decision.[5] They were asked to invest repeatedly against landslides across 30-days. In feedback-present conditions, participants made investment decisions on the investment screen and then they received feedback about the occurrence of landslides or not on the feedback screen. Participants were also provided graphical displays showing the total probability of landslides, the total income not invested in landslides, and the property wealth over days. Figures 3 and 4 show the investment and feedback screen that were shown to participants in the feedback-present conditions. In feedback-absent conditions, participants were given a text description and they made an investment decision, however, neither they were shown the feedback screen nor they were shown the graphical displays on the investment screen. Thus, in the feedback-absent condition, although participants were provided with the probability of damages due to landslides and the results of 0% and 100% investments as a text description, however, they were not shown the feedback screen as well as the graphical displays on the investment screen. Figures 5A and 5B show the text description and investment screen (without graphical displays) shown to participants in the feedback-absent conditions. In high-damage conditions, the probability of property damage, fatality and injury on any trial were set at 30%, 9%, and 90%, respectively, over 30-days. In low-damage conditions, the probability of property damage, fatality and injury on any trial were set at 3%, 1%, and 10%, respectively, over 30-days (i.e., about 1/10th of its values in the high-damage condition). Across all conditions, participants made one investment decision per trial across 30-days (this end-point was unknown to participants). Participants' goal was to maximize their total wealth

[5] An experiment involving the high-damage feed-present condition (N = 20) and the low-damage feedback-present condition (N = 23) in the ILS tool was reported by Chaturvedi et al. (2017). This data has been included in this paper with two more conditions, the high-damage feedback-absent (N = 20) and the low-damage feedback-absent (N = 20). Data in all four conditions was collected simultaneously.

over 30-days. Across all conditions, only 1-landslide could occur on a particular day. The nature of functional forms used for calculating different probabilities in ILS were unknown to participants.

The proportion of damage (in terms of daily income and property wealth) that occurred in an event of fatality, injury, or property damage was kept constant across 30-days. The property wealth decreased to half of its value every time property damage occurred in an event of a landslide. The daily income was reduced by 10% of its latest value due to a landslide-induced injury and 20% of its latest value due to a landslide-induced fatality. The initial property wealth was fixed to 20 million EC[6], which is the expected property wealth in Mandi area. The initial per-trial income was kept at 292 EC (taking into account the GDP and per-capita income of Himachal state where Mandi is located). Overall, there was a large difference between the initial income earned by a participant and the participant's initial property wealth. In this scenario, the optimal strategy dictates participants to invest their entire income in landslide protection measures, since participants' goal was to maximize total wealth. The weight (W) parameter in the equation 1 of the ILS model was fixed at 0.7 across all conditions. The value of the W parameter ensured that participants' investment decisions played a dominant role in influencing the total landslide probability. Also, the value of the W parameter was shown to participants through the investment screen on the ILS tool's interface (see Figures 3 and 5). Furthermore, the return to mitigation free parameter (M) was set at 0.8. Again the value of the M parameter ensured that probability of landslides reduced to 20% when participants invested their daily income in full. Participants performed in the ILS for 30-days, starting in mid-July and ending in mid-August. This period coincided with the period of heavy monsoon rainfall in Mandi area. Thus, participants performing in ILS experienced an increasing probability of landslides due to environmental factors (due to increasing amount of rainfall overtime). We used the investment ratio as a dependent variable for the purpose of data analyses.

The investment ratio was defined as the ratio of investment made in a trial to total investment that could have been made up to the same trial. This investment ratio was averaged across all participants in one case and averaged over all participants and days in another case. We expected the average investment ratio to be higher in the feedback-present and high-damage conditions compared to feedback-absent and low-damage conditions. We took an alpha-level (the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true) to be 0.05 (or 5%).

[6] To avoid the effects of currency units on people's decisions, we converted Indian National Rupees (INR) to a fictitious currency called "Electronic Currency (EC)," where 1 EC = 1 INR.

A

Instructions

Welcome! You are a resident of Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh, India, a township in the lap of Himalayas. You live in an area that is highly prone to landslides due to several environmental factors (e.g., the prevailing geological conditions and rainfall). During the monsoon season, due to high intensity and prolonged period of rainfall, landslides may occur in the Mandi district. These landslides may cause fatalities and injuries to you, your family, and to your friends, who reside in the same area. In addition, landslides may also damage your property and cause loss to your property wealth.

In this task, you will be repeatedly making daily investment decisions to mitigate landslides over a period of several days. We use a fictitious currency called "EC". Every day, you earn 292 EC. This money is your daily income and you may use a part or whole of it for making investments against landslides. Your investments will be used to provide landslide mitigation measures like planting trees and building reinforcements, both of which prevent landslides from occurring. Every day, you may decide to invest a certain monetary amount from your income towards landslide mitigation; however, you may also decide not to invest anything on a day (in which case, you invest 0.0 against landslides).

Your total wealth at any point in the game is the following: sum of the amounts you did not invest against landslides across days + your property wealth - damages to you, your family, your friends, and to your property due to landslides. Your property wealth is assumed to be 20 million EC at the start of the task. **The income invested against landslides is lost and it cannot contribute to the total wealth. Your goal in this task is to maximize your total wealth.**

Generally, landslides are triggered by two main factors: environmental factors (e.g., rainfall; outside one's control) and investment factors (money invested against landslides; within one's own control). The total probability of landslide = 0.2 * probability of landslide due to environment factors + 0.8 * probability of landslide due to investment factors.

Whenever a landslide occurs, if it causes fatality, then your daily earnings will be reduced by 5% of its value. If landslide causes injury to you or your family member, then your daily earnings will be reduced by 2.5% of its value. Furthermore, if a landslide occurs and it causes property damage, then your property wealth will be reduced by 80% of its value; however, the money available to you to invest against landslides due to your daily earnings will remain unaffected.

If the probability of property damage, fatality, and injury due to landslides were 30%, 9%, and 90%, respectively, then the damages due to landslides were 197 million EC with 0 EC per day investment and 114 million EC with 292 EC per day investment.

B

Figure 5. The ILS tool in the feedback-absent condition. Participants were tasked to enter across 30-days how much out of 292 EC they were willing to contribute against landslides. The task was similar in the high-damage feedback-absent condition, however, the damage percentages in the last paragraph were 30%, 9%, and 90%, respectively. **(A)** Instructions given to participants. **(B)** Investment screen (without graphical displays).

4.2 Participants

Participants were recruited from Mandi area via an online advertisement. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee at Indian Institute of Technology Mandi. Informed consent was obtained from each participant and participation was completely voluntary. All participants were from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) backgrounds and their ages ranged in between 21 and 28 years (Mean = 22 years; Standard Deviation = 2.19 years). The following percentage of participants were pursuing or had completed different degrees: 6.0% high-school degrees; 54.3% undergraduate degrees; 33.7% Master's degrees; and, 6.0% Ph.D. degrees. The Mandi area is prone to landslides and most participants self-reported to be knowledgeable or possess basic understanding about landslides. The literacy rate in Mandi and surrounding area is quite high (81.5%) (Census, 2011) and our sample was representative of the population residing in this area. When asked about their previous knowledge about landslides, 2.4% claimed to be highly knowledgeable, 16.8% claimed to be knowledgeable, 57.8% claimed to have basic understanding, 18.2% claimed to have little understanding, and 4.8% claimed to have no idea. All participants received a base payment of INR 50 (~ USD 1). In addition, there was a performance incentive based upon a lucky draw. Top-10 performing participants based upon total wealth remaining at the end of the study were put in a lucky draw and one of the participants was randomly selected and awarded a cash prize of INR 500. Participants were told about this performance incentive before they started their experiment.

4.3 Procedure

Experimental sessions were about 30-minutes long per participant. Participants were given instructions on the computer screen and were encouraged to ask questions before starting their study. Once participants had finished their study, they were asked questions related to what information and decision strategy they used on the investment screen and the feedback screen to make their decisions. Once participants ended their study, they were thanked and paid for their participation.

5 Results

5.1 Investment Ratio Across Conditions

The data were subjected to a 2 × 2 repeated-measures analysis of variance. As shown in Figure 6A, there was a significant main effect of feedback's availability: the average investment ratio was higher in feedback-present conditions (0.53) compared to that in feedback-absent conditions (0.37) (F (1, 79) = 8.86, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.10$)[7]. The bracket values are indicative of the F-value, its significance and effect size. This result is as per our expectation and shows that the presence of experiential feedback in ILS tool helped participants increase their investments against landslides compared to investments in the absence of this feedback.

[7] We performed analysis of variance statistical tests for evaluating our expectations. The F-statistics is the ratio of between-group variance and the within-group variance. The numbers in brackets after the F-statistics are the degrees of freedom (K-1, N - K), where K are the total number of groups compared and N is the overall sample size. The p-value indicates the evidence in favor of the null-hypothesis when it is true. We reject the null-hypothesis when p-value is less than the alpha-level (0.05). The η^2 is the proportion of variance associated with one or more main effects. It is a number between 0 and 1 and a value of 0.02, 0.13, and 0.26 measures a small, medium, or large correlation between the dependent and independent variables given a population size.

As shown in Figure 6B, there was a significant main-effect of strength of feedback: the average investment ratio was significantly higher in high-damage conditions (0.51) compared to that in low-damage conditions (0.38) (F (1, 79) = 5.46, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$). Again, this result is as per our expectation and shows that high-damaging feedback helped participants increase their investments against landslides compared low-damaging feedback.

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 6C, the interaction between the strength of feedback and feedback's availability was significant (F (1, 79) = 8.98, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.10$). There was no difference in the investment ratio between the high-damage condition (0.35) and low-damage condition (0.38) when experiential feedback in ILS was absent, however, the investment ratio was much higher in the high-damage condition (0.67) compared to the low-damage condition (0.38) when experiential feedback in ILS was present (Chaturvedi et al., 2017). Thus, feedback needed to be damaging in ILS to cause an increase in investments in mitigation measures against landslides.

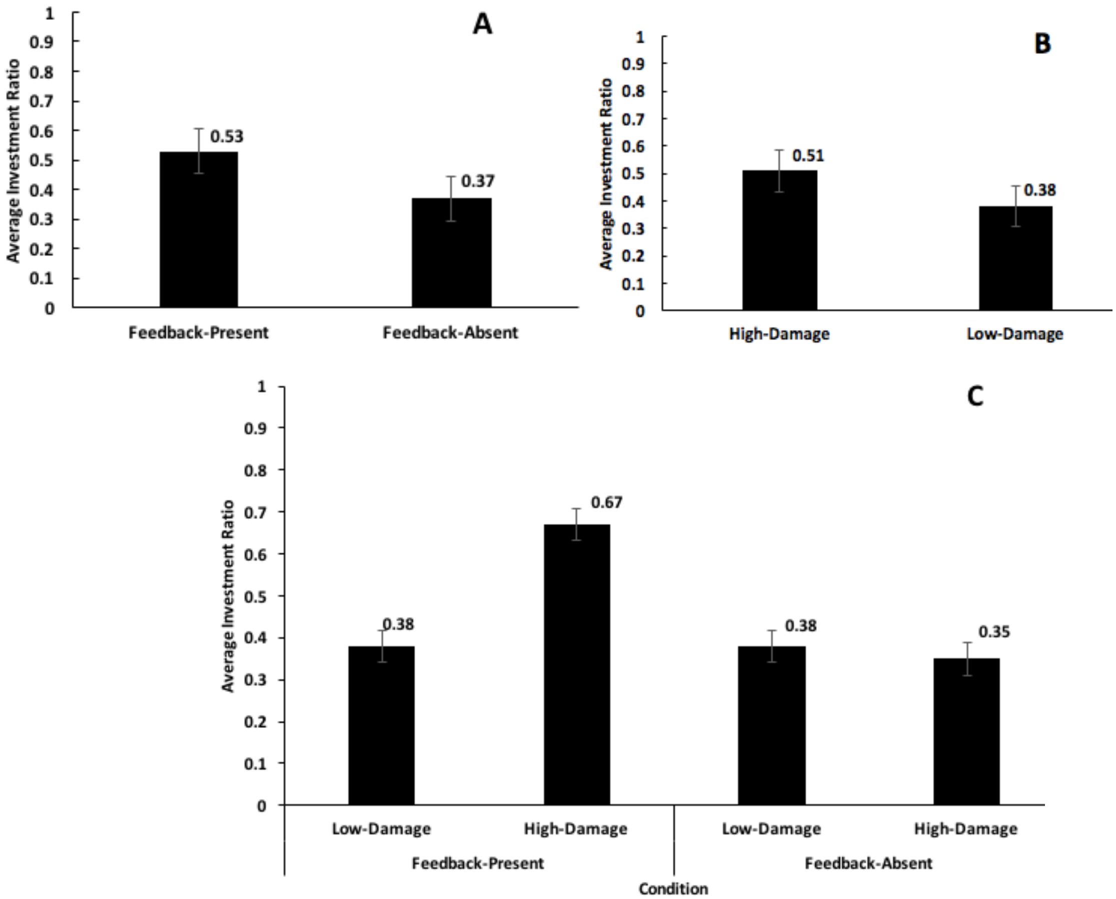


Figure 6. (A) Average investment ratio in Feedback-present and Feedback-absent conditions. **(B)** Average investment ratio in low- and high-damage conditions. **(C)** Average investment ratio in low- and high-damage conditions with Feedback-present and absent. The error bars show 95% Confidence Interval (CI) around the point estimate.

5.2 Investment Ratio Across Days

The average investment ratio increased significantly over 30-days (see Figure 7A; F (8.18, 646.1) = 8.35, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.10$). As shown in Figure 7B, the average investment ratio increased rapidly over 30-days in feedback-present conditions, however, the increase was marginal in feedback-absent conditions (F (8.18, 646.1) = 3.98, $p < 0.001$, η^2 = 0.05). Furthermore, in feedback-present conditions, the average investment ratio increased rapidly over 30-days in high-damage conditions, however, the increase was again marginal in the low-damage conditions (see Figure 7C; F (8.18, 646.1) = 6.56, $p < 0.001$, η^2 = 0.08). Lastly, as seen in Figure 7D, although there were differences in the increase in average investment ratio between low-damage and high-damage conditions when experiential feedback was present, however, such differences were non-existent between the two damage conditions when experiential feedback was absent (F (8.18, 646.1) = 4.16, $p < 0.001$, η^2 = 0.05). Overall, ILS performance helped participants increase their investments for mitigating landslides when damage feedback was high compared to low in ILS.

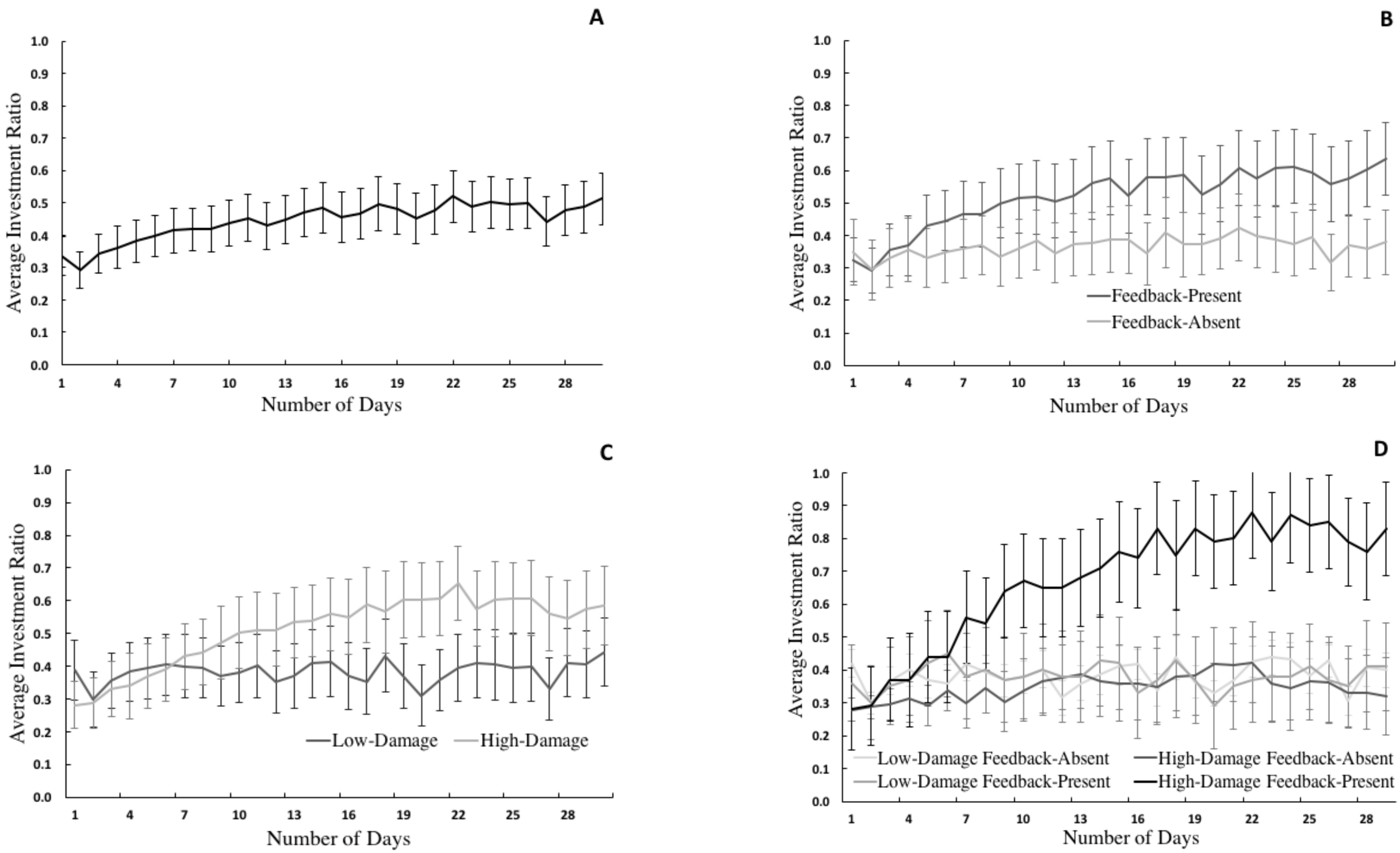


Figure 7. (A) Average investment ratio over days. **(B)** Average investment ratio over days in Feedback-present and Feedback-absent conditions. **(C)** Average investment ratio over days in low- and high-damage conditions. **(D)** Average investment ratio over days in low- and high- damage conditions with Feedback-present or absent. The error bars show 95% CI around the point estimate.

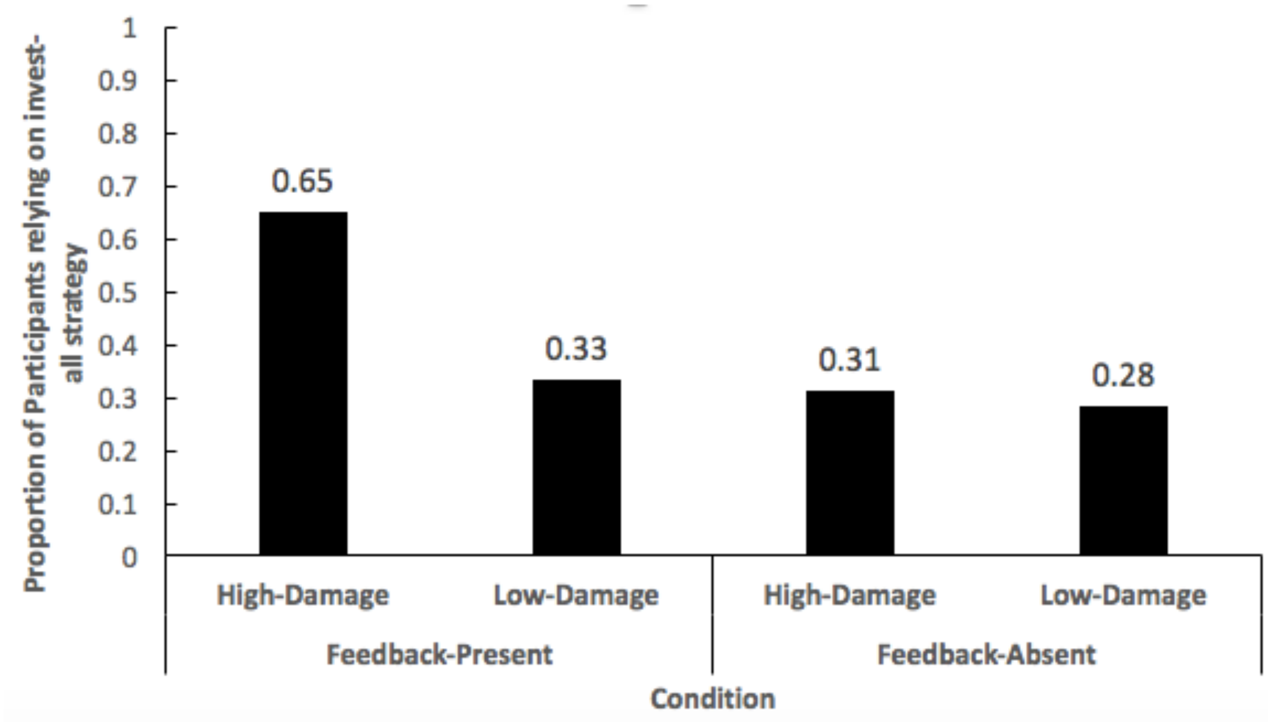


Figure 8. The proportion of reliance on the invest-all strategy across different conditions.

However, in feedback's absence in ILS, participants were unable to increase their investments for mitigating landslides, even when damages were high compared to low.

5.3 Participant Strategies

We analyzed whether an "invest-all" strategy (i.e., investing the entire daily income in mitigating landslides) was reported by participants across different conditions. As mentioned above, the invest-all strategy was an optimal strategy and this strategy's use indicated learning in the ILS tool. Figure 8 shows the proportion of participants reporting the use of the invest-all strategy. Thus, many participants learnt to follow the invest-all strategy in conditions where experiential feedback was present and it was highly damaging compared to participants in the other conditions.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper, we used an existing Interactive Landslide Simulator (ILS) tool for evaluating the effectiveness of feedback in influencing people's decisions against landslide risks. We used the ILS tool in an experiment involving human participants and tested how the strength and availability of experiential feedback in ILS helped increase people's investment decisions against landslides. Our results agree with our expectations: Experience gained in ILS enabled improved understanding of processes governing landslides and helped participants improve their investments against landslides. Given our results, we believe that ILS could potentially be used as a landslide-education tool for increasing public understanding about landslides. The ILS tool can also be used by policymakers to do what-if analyses in different scenarios concerning landslides.

First, the high-damaging feedback helped increase people's investments against landslides over time compared to the low-damaging feedback. Furthermore, the feedback's presence helped participants increase their investments against landslides over time compared to feedback's absence. These results can be explained by the previous lab-based research on use of repeated feedback or experience (Chaturvedi et al., 2017; Dutt and Gonzalez, 2010, 2011; Finucane et al., 2000; Gonzalez and Dutt, 2011a). Repeated experiential feedback likely enables learning by repeated trial-and-error procedures, where bounded-rational individuals (Simon, 1959) try different investment values in ILS and observe their effects on the occurrence of landslides and their associated consequences. The negative consequences due to landslides are higher in conditions where the damages are more compared to conditions where the damages are less. This difference in landslide consequences influences participants' investments against landslides. According to Slovic et al. (2005), loss-averse individuals tend to increase their contribution against a risk over time. In our case, similar to Slovic et al. (2005), participants started contributing slowly against landslides and, with the experience of landslide losses over time, they started contributing larger amounts to reduce landslide risks.

We also found that the reliance on invest-all strategy was higher in the high-damage and feedback-present condition compared to the low-damage and feedback-absent condition. The invest-all strategy was the optimal strategy in the ILS tool. This result shows that participants learned the underlying system dynamics (i.e., how their actions influenced the probability of landslides) in ILS better in the feedback-rich condition compared to the feedback-poor condition. As participants were not provided with exact equations governing the ILS tool and they had to only learn from trial-and-error feedback, the saliency of the feedback due to messages and images likely helped participants' learning in the tool. In fact, we observed that the use of the optimal invest-all strategy was maximized when the experiential feedback was highly damaging. One likely reason for this observation could be the high educational levels of participants residing in the study area, where the literacy rate was more than 80%. Thus, it seems that participants' education levels helped them make the best use of damaging feedback.

We believe that the ILS tool can be integrated in teaching courses on landslide sustainable practices in schools from kindergarten to standard 12th. These courses could make use of the ILS tool and focus on educating students about causes, consequences, and risks of hazardous landslides. We believe that the use of ILS tool will make teaching more effective as ILS will help incorporate experiential feedback and other factors in teaching in interactive ways. The ILS tool's parameter settings could be customized to a certain geographical area over a certain time period of play. In addition, the ILS tool could be used to show participants the investment actions other participants (e.g., society or neighbours). The presence of investment decisions of opponents in addition to one's own decisions will likely enable social norms to influence people's investments and learning in the tool (Schultz et al., 2007). These features makes ILS tool very attractive for landslide education in communities in the future.

Furthermore, the ILS tool holds a great promise for policy-research against landslides. For example, in future, researchers may vary different system-response parameters in ILS (e.g. weight of one's decisions and return to mitigation actions) and feedback (e.g. numbers, text messages and images for damage) in order to study their effects on people's decisions against landslides. Here, researchers could evaluate differences in ILS's ability to increase public contributions in the face of other system-response parameters and feedback. In addition, researchers can use the ILS tool to do "what-if" analyses related to landslides for certain time periods and for certain geographical locations. The ILS tool has the ability to be customized to certain geographical area as well as certain time periods, where spatial parameters (e.g., soil type and geology) as well as temporal parameters (e.g., daily rainfall) can be defined for the study area. Once the environmental factors have been accounted for, the ILS tool enables researchers to account for assumptions on human factors (contribution against landslides) with real-world consequences (injury, fatality, and infrastructure damage). Such assumptions may help researchers model human decisions in computational cognitive models, which are based upon influential theories of how people make decisions from feedback (Dutt and Gonzalez, 2012; Gonzalez and Dutt, 2011b). In summary, these features make ILS tool apt for policy research, especially for areas that are prone to landslides. This research will also help test the ILS tool and its applicability in different real-world settings.

Although the ILS tool causes the use of optimal invest-all strategies among people in conditions where experiential feedback is highly damaging, however, more research is needed on investigating the nature of learning that the tool imparts among people. As people's investments for mitigating landslides in ILS directly influences the risk of landslides due to human and environmental factors, investments indeed have the potential of educating people about landslide risks. Still, it is important to investigate how investing money in the ILS tool truly educates people about landslides.

Currently, in the ILS model, we have assumed that damages from fatality and injury influence participants' daily-income levels. The reduced income levels do create adverse consequences, but one could also argue that they would be much less of concern for most people compared to the injury and fatality itself. Furthermore, people could also choose to migrate from an area when the landslide mitigation cost is too high and adaptation becomes impossible, especially due to the differences between the landslide hazard and other hazards such as flood, drought, and general climate risks. As part of our future research, we plan to investigate the influence of feedback that causes only injuries or fatalities compared to the feedback that causes economic losses due to injuries and fatalities. Also, as part of our future research in the ILS tool, we plan to investigate people's migration decisions when the landslide mitigation costs are too high and adaptation to landslides is not possible.

In the ILS model, we used a linear model to compute the probability of landslides due to human factors. Also, the probabilistic equations governing the physical factors in the ILS model were not disclosed to participants, who seemed to possess high education levels. One could argue that there are several other linear and non-linear models that could help compute the probability of landslides due to human factors. Some of these models could not only influence the probability of landslides, but also the severity of consequences (damages) caused by landslides. Also, other generic models could account for the physical factors in the ILS tool. We plan to try these possibilities as part of our future work in the ILS tool. Specifically, we plan to assume different models of investments in the ILS tool and we plan to test them against participants with different education levels.

In the current experiment, we assumed a large disparity between a participant's property wealth and her daily income. In addition, as part of the ILS model, we did not consider any support from government or international agencies against damages from landslides. In certain cases, especially in developing countries, mitigation of landslide risks may often be financed by government or international agencies. As part of our future work, we plan to extend the ILS model to include assumptions of contributions from government or international agencies. Such assumptions will help us determine the willingness of common people to contribute against landslide disasters, which is important as the developing world becomes developed over time.

To test our hypotheses, we presented participants with a high damage scenario and a low damage scenario, where the probabilities of property damage, injury, and fatality were high and low, respectively. However, such scenarios may not be realistic, where people may want to migrate from both low and damage areas in even the least developed countries. In future research with ILS, we plan to calibrate the probability of damages, injury, and fatality to realistic values and test the effectiveness of ILS in improving the participants' investment decision making.

Furthermore, in our experiment, when landslide did not occur and experiential feedback was present, people were presented with a smiling face followed by a message. The message and emoticon were provided to connect the cause-and-effect relationships for participants in the ILS tool. However, it could also be that the landslide did not occur on a certain trial due to the stochasticity in the simulation rather than participants' investment actions. Although such situations are possible over shorter time-periods, however, over longer time-periods increased investments from people will only reduce the probability of landslides.

In this paper, the experiment used a daily investment setting in the ILS tool. However, the ILS tool can easily be customized to different time periods ranging from seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years. As part of our future research, we plan to extend the daily assumption by considering people making decisions on longer time-scales ranging from months to years. In addition, in the experiment, we assumed a value of 0.7 and 0.8 for the weight (W) and return to mitigation (M) parameters. These W and M values indicated that landslide risks could largely be mitigated by human actions. However, this assumption may not be the case always, especially for mitigation measures like tree plantations. For example, afforestation alone may not help in reducing deep-seated landslides in hilly areas (Forbes, 2013). Thus, it would be worthwhile investigating as part of future research on how people's decision-making evolves in conditions where investments likely influence the landslide probability (higher values of W and M parameters) compared to conditions where investments unlikely influence the landslide probability (lower values of W and M parameters). Some of these ideas form the immediate next steps in our ongoing research program on landslide risk communication.

Data availability. Data used in this article have not been deposited to respect the privacy of users. The data can be provided to readers upon request.

Author contributions. AA designed the website, administered the account, PC wrote the first draft of website articles and collected data. VD supervised the website contents. AA provided technical support for website maintenance. PC and VD analysed the data and prepared the manuscript. PC and VD revised the manuscript.

Competing interests. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

*Acknowledgements***.** This research was partially supported by a grant from Himachal Pradesh State Council for Science, Technology and Environment to Varun Dutt (grant number: IITM / HPSCSTE / VD / 130). We thank Akanksha Jain and Sushmita Negi, Centre for Converging Technologies, University of Rajasthan, India for providing preliminary support for data collection in this project.

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