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Shota Kato
Professor, Seismology Research Center, University of Tokyo, Japan

Corresponding Author:
Shota Kato
Professor, Seismology Research Center, University of Tokyo, Japan

Seismic hazard assessment in earthquake-prone regions

Shota Kato

Abstract
Seismic hazard assessment is a critical process for understanding and mitigating the risks associated with earthquakes in vulnerable regions. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the methodologies used in seismic hazard assessment, including probabilistic seismic hazard analysis (PSHA) and deterministic seismic hazard analysis (DSHA). It explores the key parameters involved, such as seismic source characterization, ground motion prediction equations, and site-specific response analysis. The study highlights recent advancements in seismic hazard mapping, the integration of geological and geophysical data, and the use of advanced computational models. Case studies from various earthquake-prone regions illustrate the practical applications and challenges of seismic hazard assessment. The paper concludes with recommendations for improving hazard assessment practices and enhancing earthquake resilience through informed urban planning, building codes, and public awareness.

Keywords: Seismic hazard assessment, earthquake-prone regions, probabilistic seismic hazard analysis, deterministic seismic hazard analysis, seismic source characterization

Introduction

Seismic hazard assessment is a fundamental aspect of earthquake engineering and disaster risk reduction. Understanding the potential seismic hazards in a given region is crucial for developing effective strategies to mitigate the impacts of earthquakes on communities, infrastructure, and the environment. The increasing frequency and severity of seismic events globally underscore the need for comprehensive and accurate hazard assessments to enhance earthquake resilience. Earthquakes pose significant risks to densely populated urban areas, critical infrastructure, and economic stability. The devastation caused by recent major earthquakes, such as the 2011 Tohoku earthquake in Japan and the 2015 Gorkha earthquake in Nepal, highlights the urgent need for robust seismic hazard assessment frameworks. These events have demonstrated the complex interplay between seismic sources, ground motion characteristics, and local site conditions, necessitating sophisticated analytical approaches. Seismic hazard assessment involves evaluating the likelihood and potential intensity of ground shaking due to earthquakes. This process is essential for informing building codes, urban planning, and emergency preparedness measures. Traditionally, two primary methodologies are employed: Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Analysis (PSHA) and Deterministic Seismic Hazard Analysis (DSHA). PSHA quantifies the probability of different levels of ground shaking occurring over a specified period, incorporating uncertainties in seismic source characterization and ground motion prediction. DSHA, on the other hand, assesses the effects of specific earthquake scenarios, providing insights into the maximum expected ground motions for a given region. Recent advancements in seismic hazard assessment have been driven by improvements in data collection, computational modelling, and integration of geological and geophysical information. High-performance computing has enabled more detailed simulations, while region-specific ground motion prediction equations (GMPEs) have improved the accuracy of hazard estimates. Despite these advancements, significant challenges remain, particularly in data-scarce regions where limited seismic records hinder comprehensive assessments. This paper aims to provide a detailed review of the methodologies, key parameters, and recent advancements in seismic hazard assessment. It will explore the integration of geological and geophysical data, the development of advanced computational models, and the application of these techniques in various earthquake-prone regions.

By comparing relevant studies from regions such as California, Japan, and Nepal, this review will highlight the variability and complexity of seismic hazard assessments across different geological settings. Furthermore, the paper will discuss the challenges and uncertainties associated with seismic hazard assessment, including data limitations and model inaccuracies. It will also examine the role of risk communication and community engagement in enhancing earthquake preparedness and resilience. The recommendations provided will focus on improving data collection, advancing modelling techniques, and strengthening policy frameworks to build safer and more resilient communities.

Main objective of paper

The main objective of this paper is to comprehensively review seismic hazard assessment methodologies, advancements, and challenges, and to provide recommendations for improving hazard assessment practices and enhancing earthquake resilience in earthquake-prone regions.

Reviews of literature

Field *et al*. (2013) [1] conducted a seminal study on probabilistic seismic hazard analysis (PSHA), emphasizing its application in regions like California. Their research highlighted the integration of multiple seismic source models and the development of region-specific ground motion prediction equations (GMPEs), which significantly improved the reliability of hazard assessments. This study also discussed the limitations of data availability and the uncertainties associated with GMPEs, issues that are echoed in the current review. Satake *et al*. (2013) [2] provided a detailed analysis of seismic hazard assessment in Japan, focusing on the deterministic seismic hazard analysis (DSHA) approach. Their work on the 2011 Tohoku earthquake underscored the importance of considering subduction zone earthquakes and integrating tsunami data into hazard assessments. This approach contrasts with the probabilistic methods favored in other regions, highlighting the need for tailored methodologies depending on local seismicity and geological conditions. Abrahamson *et al*. (2016) [3] advanced the field of GMPEs by developing the ASK14 model for active crustal regions. Their work emphasized the necessity of high-quality ground motion data and the importance of regional adaptations of GMPEs. This study aligns with the current review's recommendation for region-specific GMPEs to enhance the accuracy of seismic hazard assessments. Chiou and Youngs (2014) [4] updated their NGA model, further refining GMPEs for various tectonic settings. Their research contributed to the understanding of how different fault mechanisms and site conditions impact ground motion predictions. The findings from their study support the current review's discussion on the importance of detailed seismic source characterization and site-specific response analyses. Stewart *et al*. (2014) [6] focused on semi-empirical site effects models for global applications. Their study highlighted the variability in site response due to local soil and rock conditions, a critical parameter in seismic hazard assessments. This research reinforces the need for site-specific studies, particularly in regions with diverse geological settings. In Nepal, Gautam and Bhattarai (2016) [7] conducted a PSHA that adapted global GMPEs to local conditions. Their study demonstrated the challenges and importance of customizing hazard assessments to regional seismicity, an approach that is crucial for improving the accuracy of assessments in data-scarce regions. Nakamura *et al*. (2017) [8] used advanced computational models to simulate ground motions for the 2016 Kumamoto earthquake. Their work demonstrated the benefits of high-performance computing in enhancing the precision of seismic hazard simulations, a recommendation also made in the current review. Graves and Pitarka (2010) [9] utilized a hybrid approach combining deterministic and probabilistic methods to simulate broadband ground motions. Their study provided insights into the advantages of integrating multiple methodologies for comprehensive hazard assessments. Finally, Becker *et al*. (2015) [11] emphasized the importance of risk communication and community resilience in seismic hazard mitigation. Their findings align with the current review's recommendations on the necessity of public awareness and community engagement to enhance earthquake preparedness and resilience.

Seismic hazard assessment

Seismic hazard assessment is a critical component of earthquake risk mitigation and involves evaluating the potential ground shaking and associated impacts due to earthquakes. The assessment can be conducted using two primary methodologies: Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Analysis (PSHA) and Deterministic Seismic Hazard Analysis (DSHA). PSHA quantifies the likelihood of various levels of ground shaking occurring over a specified period by integrating seismic source characterization, ground motion prediction equations (GMPEs), and site-specific response analyses. In contrast, DSHA focuses on the effects of specific, credible earthquake scenarios, simulating the resulting ground motions and producing hazard maps. Relevant studies, such as those conducted in California by Field *et al*. (2013) [1], have demonstrated the effectiveness of PSHA in providing comprehensive hazard assessments by incorporating a wide range of possible seismic events and their probabilities. However, DSHA has proven valuable in regions like Japan, where detailed simulations of large subduction zone earthquakes provide critical insights for preparedness and mitigation (e.g., Satake *et al*., 2013) [2]. Recent advancements in computational modelling and data integration, including geological and geophysical data, have enhanced the accuracy and reliability of seismic hazard assessments. High-performance computing has enabled more detailed simulations and the development of region-specific GMPEs, as discussed by Abrahamson *et al*. (2016) [3]. Despite these advancements, challenges such as data limitations and model uncertainties persist, particularly in data-scarce regions. These challenges underscore the need for continuous improvement in data collection, model development, and public communication to effectively mitigate seismic risks.

Parameters in seismic hazard assessment

Key parameters in seismic hazard assessment include seismic source characterization, ground motion prediction equations (GMPEs), and site-specific response analysis. Seismic source characterization involves identifying and describing potential seismic sources, such as fault lines and seismic zones, as well as analyzing historical seismicity to understand patterns and trends. Studies in regions like Nepal (e.g., Gautam and Bhattarai, 2016) [7] have highlighted the importance of adapting global GMPEs to local conditions, which can significantly influence hazard assessments. GMPEs are empirical relationships that predict ground shaking intensity based on factors such as earthquake magnitude and distance. The development of region-specific GMPEs, as seen in studies from California (e.g., Chiou and Youngs, 2014) [4] and Japan (e.g., Si and Midorikawa, 1999), has improved the predictive accuracy of seismic hazard assessments. Site-specific response analysis assesses how local soil and rock conditions affect ground motion, an essential consideration in regions with diverse geological conditions. Advanced site classification and response studies have been conducted in earthquake-prone areas to understand local amplification effects, as noted in the work by Stewart *et al*. (2014) [6]. Comparative studies between regions, such as the densely populated areas of California and the diverse geological settings of Nepal, emphasize the variability and complexity of seismic hazard assessments. Despite advancements in understanding these parameters, challenges remain in accurately characterizing seismic sources and developing reliable GMPEs, particularly in regions with limited seismic data. Continuous efforts to refine these parameters and incorporate them into comprehensive models are crucial for improving the reliability of seismic hazard assessments and enhancing earthquake resilience.

Recommendations

To enhance seismic hazard assessment and earthquake resilience, several key recommendations emerge from relevant studies. First, improving data collection through the expansion and modernization of seismic monitoring networks is essential. This includes deploying more seismic stations and using advanced technologies to gather high-quality geological and geophysical data. Studies from regions like Japan (e.g., Nakamura *et al*., 2017) [8] demonstrate the benefits of comprehensive seismic networks in providing accurate and timely data for hazard assessments. Second, advancing modelling techniques is crucial. This involves developing region-specific ground motion prediction equations (GMPEs) with higher predictive accuracy and integrating geological, geophysical, and engineering models. High-performance computing should be leveraged to conduct detailed simulations and analyses. Comparative studies between regions with advanced modelling capabilities, such as California (e.g., Graves and Pitarka, 2010) [9], and those with developing systems, like Nepal (e.g., Bhatta *et al*., 2016) [7], highlight the significant improvements that can be achieved with enhanced modelling techniques. Third, strengthening resilience through the implementation and enforcement of stringent building codes based on seismic hazard assessments is vital. This ensures that structures are designed and constructed to withstand potential seismic events. Additionally, public awareness and community engagement are critical components. Educating communities about seismic risks and promoting preparedness measures can significantly reduce the impacts of earthquakes. Involving local communities in hazard assessment and risk reduction efforts, as seen in successful case studies (e.g., Becker *et al*., 2015) [11], fosters a culture of resilience. Overall, continuous efforts to improve data collection, advance modelling techniques, and strengthen community engagement are essential for enhancing seismic hazard assessment practices and building earthquake-resilient communities.

Conclusion

Seismic hazard assessment is a multifaceted and essential process for mitigating earthquake risks in vulnerable regions. Through the detailed review of methodologies such as Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Analysis (PSHA) and Deterministic Seismic Hazard Analysis (DSHA), this paper has highlighted the importance of integrating seismic source characterization, ground motion prediction equations (GMPEs), and site-specific response analyses to produce reliable hazard assessments. Comparative studies from regions like California and Japan have demonstrated the effectiveness of advanced seismic assessment techniques and the need for region-specific adaptations. Despite significant advancements in computational modelling and data integration, challenges remain, particularly in data-scarce regions and in addressing model uncertainties. The paper underscores the necessity for continuous improvements in data collection, refinement of modelling techniques, and public engagement to enhance earthquake resilience. Implementing stringent building codes, expanding seismic monitoring networks, and fostering community involvement are critical steps towards reducing seismic risks. By incorporating these recommendations, stakeholders can improve the accuracy and reliability of seismic hazard assessments and contribute to the development of safer, more resilient communities in earthquake-prone regions.

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