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Assessment of Disaster Preparedness of Selected Libraries in Bauchi Metropolis

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Abstract

This study assessed the state of disaster preparedness of selected libraries in Bauchi Metropolis. The study identified the prevalent type of disasters experienced by the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis; determined the level of disaster preparedness by the selected libraries; and examined the constraints to disaster preparedness in the selected libraries. The survey research design was used in conducting the study. Nine libraries were purposively selected. A questionnaire was designed as instrument for data collection. Data were analyzed using frequency count and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that, despite the availability of hand-held fire extinguishers in their libraries, staff were never trained on-how-to use them; the libraries did not have Building Maintenance Committees; and there was lack of staff training on disaster management either in form of workshops, seminars etc. The study recommended the need for all the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis to ensure and tighten the security of their library resources in order to reduce the menace of theft, there is need for periodic drills and exercises for staff to be trained on how to use hand-held fire extinguisher in the event fire disaster; libraries should have Building Maintenance Committees; and for the library staff to be sponsored to attend conferences, seminars and workshops so as to enhance their knowledge on disaster preparedness and management strategies.

Keywords: Assessment, Disaster Preparedness, Selected Libraries, Bauchi Metropolis

1.1 Introduction

A library disaster is an unexpected event which put collections at risk. No institution can be excluded from or is immune to the possibility. Disaster planning is a matter of basic security for libraries and archives, their staff and their collections. It is considered to be an essential part of any preservation programme to be implemented

by any kind of library or archives. A formal written plan enables an institution to respond efficiently and quickly to an emergency, and to minimize damage to the building and its contents.

In every environment, especially in the libraries' environment within Bauchi metropolis; library disasters have the unique quality of being both unexpected and

inevitable. Disasters can be caused by nature. These include floods, earthquakes, and tornadoes. Disasters can be caused by man. These include civil unrest, arson, and vandalism. While we tend to think of disasters as large scale events, most disasters will be smaller in scope, much less newsworthy such roof leakages, termite activities, yet just as destructive. Libraries and Archives are bedevilled by everyday assaults: leaking roofs, dripping pipes, a mouldy book returned by a patron, a small fire set in the book return, a window left open during a night of pouring rain (Abareh, 2014).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The perception that disaster preparedness is not a major concern in libraries is compounded by the fact that, many Library and Information Science Departments in Nigerian Universities do not offer courses on the topic so as to teach prospective Library Professionals about disaster preparedness. Furthermore, many disasters that occur in libraries in Nigeria are not properly documented, and quite a number of cases go unreported. Planning in advance is the key to survival whether about a person, a family, a community or public institution such as libraries. Thus, disaster preparedness should be a major concern for any library that wants to survive. Disasters are not location specific hence, the impetus for this research was born out of the need to investigate into the seemingly limited disaster preparedness by the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis with a view to determining factors that will redress the identified challenges.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the various level of disaster preparedness by selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the prevalent type of disasters experienced by the selected libraries in

2. Determine the level of Disaster Preparedness by the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis; and
3. Examine the constraints to disaster preparedness in the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Disaster planning and preparedness might not seem a pressing concern-until disaster strikes. Libraries need to make every effort to prepare themselves for possible disasters, by analysing their situation and resources, and devising disaster preparedness plan in order to reduce the effect of disasters when it occurs. While the National Fire Protection Association (2004) describes preparedness as “activities, programs, systems developed to support and enhance mitigation, response to, and recovery from disaster emergencies”, Sutton and Tierney (2006) enumerated eight dimensions of desired end for preparedness activities such as: Hazard knowledge; management; direction; coordination of emergency operations; formal and initial responses of agreements; resources acquisition aimed at ensuring that emergency functions are carried out smoothly; life safety protection; property protection; emergency coping and restoration of key functions; and initiation of recovery activities.

Fox (1989) identified five elements of disaster preparedness as protection, planning, prevention, response and recovery. Similarly, Sutton and Tierney (2006) aligned with Fox (1989) position by describing disaster preparedness as a concept encompassing all measures aimed at enhancing life safety when a disaster occurs. It also include actions designed to enhance the ability to undertake emergency actions in order to protect property and certain disaster damage and disruption as well the ability to engage in post-disaster restoration and early recovery activities. The

National Response Framework (2008) provides three principal benefits of planning: (1) it allows jurisdictions to influence the course of events in an emergency by determining in advance the actions, policies, and processes that will be followed; (2) it guides other preparedness activities; and (3) it contributes to unity of effort by providing a common blueprint for activity in the event of an emergency, and concluded that, planning is a foundational element of both preparedness and response. Perry and Lindell (2003), however, approach disaster preparedness from the planning perspective, identifying ten guiding principles to be adhered to during the planning. The authors take the position that appropriate planning principles are a critical foundation for preparedness.

Library staff should be enlightened about disasters generally, its causes, the immediate action to be taken during emergency situations. These could be possible through sensitization programmes as adduced by Ogden (1999) who supports the use of working policy that would ensure routine training and sensitization on safety measures and security measures for recovery after natural disaster. This position was further supported by Hasenay and Kritalic (2010) who asserted that, “the first step should be raising the awareness and education about the importance of disaster management issues as a prerequisite for efficient, comprehensive and sustainable preservation of services and collections”.

Oboko (1991) also argued for the need to make library staff aware of rescue options available to them in times of emergency. Furthermore, disaster preparedness involves creation of awareness among people living in disaster prone areas of impending danger they face and how best to respond in the event of an occurrence. Public education on disaster mitigation is very important. From the standpoint of Alegbeleye (1993), preparedness in the context of disaster control

planning for libraries and allied institutions, means, “being in a state of alertness and vigilance so that when disaster occurs the organization is not caught napping, but is indeed in a position to react responsibly, maturely and rationally”. The disaster preparedness plan is a comprehensive document/ guide which describe procedures as where to get what, whom to contact during emergencies. Lyall (1993) explained a disaster preparedness plan “as a document which describes procedures desired to prevent and prepare for disasters and those proposed to respond and recover from disasters when they occur. The responsibility of performing these tasks is allocated to various staff members who comprise “the disaster team/committee”.

All preparedness activities must be based on knowledge about hazards, the likelihood of different types of disaster events, and likely impacts on the natural and built environment. Hazard analysis identifies where likely hazards exist in the surrounding vicinity and within the building, their probability and criticality, so as to prepare a mitigation plan based on the vulnerabilities found. It also implies taking inventory of all equipment such as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, fire alarms, fire tracers etc. are relevant by making sure that they are in good working condition for use in emergency circumstances. If libraries in Bauchi metropolis do not have such check mechanisms, they may be taken unawares in the event of a disaster. In 2003 a survey was launched world-wide among National Libraries in order to know which ones did have a disaster plan.

The results were alarming; out of 177 libraries, only 39 (22%) had a disaster plan (IFLA-PAC, 2006). In a similar survey of Croatian libraries and Kritalic (2010), they found that only 5 (13%) libraries had official written document that represents disaster plan, and 3 (8%) had such plan in an unofficial

form. Abareh and Toyyo (2007) surveyed the state of disaster management in Nigerian University Libraries and found varying levels of unpreparedness by the libraries surveyed in the event of any type of disaster. One of the findings of Abareh (2014) survey on disaster preparedness by Heads of Academic Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria revealed that the level of staff sensitization and awareness on disaster preparedness was at their lowest ebb, as only 28.6% were sensitized on disaster preparedness. While Aminu (2014) found that, there were inadequate securities and lack of awareness on disaster management in Public Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria; Basaka (2014) also found that there was no staff training on disaster in Public libraries in North Eastern Nigeria. Abareh's (2016) study established lack of budgetary provision and funding as major impediments to effective disaster preparedness by the university libraries in North-East Zone, Nigeria. Young, Boatbil, and Baada (2015) study on disaster preparedness of libraries with insight from Polytechnic libraries in Ghana showed general absence of security policies and disaster plans and were found to be ill-prepared with respect to disasters. These findings probably may be a general reflection of what is obtainable in most of the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis today. Hence, the focus of the study was to assess Disaster Preparedness of libraries as it will enable the development of contingency plans on

prevention measures for conservation and preservation of library resources.

3.1 Methodology

The survey design was used for the study. One set of the questionnaire was constructed with 12 itemised questions to elicit responses from respondents. The questionnaire was administered to nine (9) selected heads of libraries within Bauchi Metropolis between October and December, 2017 by the researchers. The questionnaire had four sections: Section A: Background Information; Section B: Experience of Disaster and prevalence; Section C: Level of Disaster preparedness; and Section D: Constraints to Disaster Preparedness. In order to ensure a high rate of return, copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved by the researchers. Descriptive statistics was used in analyzing the data collected.

Nine (9) copies of the questionnaire were administered to all the heads of libraries in Bauchi metropolis. All the nine (9) copies were returned in useable forms which were valid for analysis, giving a response rate of 100per cent. The results and discussion were treated under four sub-headings: Background Information; Experience of Disaster; Disaster Facilities and Equipment; and Constraints to Disaster Preparedness. Table 1 shows the profile of the responding libraries.

Table 1: Profile of Selected Libraries Surveyed in Bauchi Metropolis

Name of Library	Type of Library	Year Established	Designation	Gender
School of Nursing and Midwifery, Bauchi	Special	2007	Librarian	Male
Bauchi State University, Bauchi Campus	Academic	2011	Librarian II	Female
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital. Bauchi	Special	2010	University Librarian	Male

Abubakar Tatar Ali Polytechnic, Bauchi	Academic	1976	Polytechnic Librarian	Male
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi	Academic	1981	University Librarian	Male
Bauchi State Library Board, Bauchi	Public	1976	State Librarian	Male
College of Agriculture Library, Bauchi	Special/ Academic	2013	College Librarian	Male
Muhammadu Wabi Library, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi	Academic	1976	Polytechnic Librarian	Female
National Library of Nigeria, Bauchi Branch	National	1983	Deputy Director	Male

Source: Heads of selected Libraries

4.1 Results and Discussion Prevalence and Type of Disasters Experienced

One of the objectives of the study was to identify the prevalence of the type of disasters that those libraries experienced at one time or the other. 8 (88.88%) libraries identified theft as a major threat; 5 (55.55%) identified Roof Leakages as another; while 3 (33.33%) identified Fire, as recurring disasters in their libraries. It can be inferred that, these are some of disasters that were experienced prevalent in the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis.

Level of Disaster Preparedness

The second objective of the study was to determine the level of disaster preparedness. Regarding the availability of disaster equipment and facilities, all the 9 (100%) libraries admitted they had only Fire extinguishers. This was followed by Portable generators, First Aid Boxes; Smoke detectors; Torch lights and Rechargeable lanterns respectively. Another question was posed as to whether their libraries have ever trained their staff on how to use hand-held fire extinguishers; all the responding libraries answered “No”

The level of staff awareness on disaster preparedness was adjudged low with

only 3 (33.33%) describing their staff awareness on disaster preparedness. As to whether libraries have Building Maintenance Committees, 8 (88.88%) answered “No”, with only 1 (11.11%) who answered “Yes”. All the 9 (100%) libraries have never sponsored any staff to attend any workshop/seminar/training on disaster preparedness be it at local, national or international levels. These responses therefore, presuppose that, the basic disaster requisites were lacking with respect to disaster preparedness in all the selected libraries surveyed.

Constraints to Disaster Preparedness

Respondents have identified the Absence of policy guidelines; Lack of Administrative will; Lack of funds; and Lack of staff training as the major impediments to disaster preparedness in their libraries. With these major constraints, one can infer that disaster preparedness and the management of disaster in the libraries studied, the status of this important aspect of the libraries leaves much to be desired.

5.1 Findings

The following findings were drawn from the results of the study which revealed:

1. Theft of library resources was the prevalent disasters experienced by

- majority of the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis.
2. That despite the availability of hand-held fire extinguishers in their libraries, staff were never trained on-how-to use them; libraries did not have Building Maintenance Committees; and library staff lacked training on disaster preparedness either in form of workshops, seminars; and
 3. The absence of policy guidelines, lack of administrative will, lack of funds, and lack of training impeded the disaster preparedness of selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis.

Conclusion

The significance of library collections for effective service delivery, their preservation, as well as the library building itself cannot be overemphasized. The impact and consequences of disaster occurrences in libraries can be devastating, if not completely annihilating. The findings of this study pointed to the fact that, the state of disasters preparedness plans was essentially non-existent in the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis. Hence there is need for these libraries to make disaster preparedness a priority with regard to preservation of their invaluable resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers wish to make the following recommendations:

1. There is need for all the selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis to ensure and tighten the security of their library resources in order to reduce the menace of theft always;
2. There is need for periodic drills and exercises; as well as for staff be trained on how to use hand-held fire extinguishers in the event fire disaster; there is need for libraries to have Building Maintenance Committees; and
3. There is need for policy guidelines on disaster preparedness; and adequate of training of library staff on disaster preparedness by selected libraries in Bauchi metropolis in order to overcome the identified constraints.

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