



Impact of librarians' perception towards disaster management in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of librarians' perception towards disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria. The objective of the study was to determine the extent of disaster management, and find out the librarians' perception regarding disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria. Two research questions and one research hypothesis were raised, answered and tested. Descriptive survey research design of the correlational approach was adopted for the study. Population of the study was 402 respondents. The study adopted total enumeration sampling technique. The structured questionnaire titled, "Questionnaire on the Impact of Librarians' Perception towards Disaster Management in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria, (Q ILPDMULSSN)" was used for data collection. A total of 402 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents within two weeks and the completed copies of the questionnaire were collected after one week to ensure high retrieval rate of the distributed instrument. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics in form of percentage and frequency count, statistical mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation SD. The finding revealed that disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria which includes disaster recovery assists in restoring damaged equipment, physical buildings as well as lives to normalcy (\bar{x} = 3.34), SD = 0.08, is positive. Finding also revealed that librarians' perception regarding disaster management which include disaster management is too broad for university libraries to undertake alone (\bar{x} = 3.14), SD = 0.07, in university libraries in south-south Nigeria, is positive. The study recommended that the practice of disaster management should be taken seriously by the librarians in order to protect the library buildings and its resources from disasters.

Keywords: Disaster management, Library resources, resource availability, Preservation

Introduction

University libraries are learning hub that aid educational development in Nigeria. These university libraries acquire, process, store and disseminate valuable information resources such as text books, journals, students past projects, government gazette, newspapers, magazines, reference materials such as encyclopaedia, hand books, dictionaries,

directories and other related materials such as laptops, desktops, photocopiers, printers, scanners, binding machines and projectors to support academic activities. Onuoha, Ukangwa and Ofuza (2020) described university library as a “powerhouse responsible for the provision of information resources”. Similarly, Umar (2018) indicated that University Library is the most important retrieval institution and the healing centre where variety of information services are provided to solve societal problems. Consequently, Chukwuji and Umeji (2020) opined that university libraries play an important role in the intellectual development of students and faculties as well as the development of a society. The authors added that university libraries provide information resources which support learning, teaching and research with relevant and current information resources in various accessible format required to support the mandate of the university.

Thus, these resources are fragile and prone to disaster, hence, the need to undertake this study tailored towards disaster management. Accordingly, disaster management in university libraries involved prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions undertaken by librarians to preserved library collections, services and infrastructure from destruction. The primary objective of disaster management is to minimize potential losses, provide timely and appropriate aid to victims, facilitate quick recovery and improve library services (Idris, 2012). Chakrabarti and Pramanik (2017) described disaster management as a procedure by which library staff manage disaster together. The authors explained that individuals must have knowledge about risks, to identify disaster early. Sahoo and Senapati (2017) stated that disaster management is cyclic. This means that the end of one phase is the beginning of another.

Accordingly, disaster management as defined by the Himachal Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (2020) refers to, an ongoing and extensive approach that involves the development, coordination and implementation of measures aimed at preventing disasters. The primary goal of disaster management is to minimize the impact of calamities by identifying their causes and devising appropriate solutions, as pointed out by (Sahoo & Senapati, 2017). Bansal (2015) added that disaster management comprises several components, including disaster control planning, risk assessment, training and financing.

In another view, disaster management is a preventive measure implemented by librarians to mitigate the harmful effects of various disasters. Disaster management is essential in prolonging the existence of valuable information resources such as books, journals, magazines, past student projects, newspapers, reference materials, projectors, computers, photocopy machines, scanners and library buildings. Thus, disaster management as used in this study is the action or measures undertaken by librarians to protect and preserve the physical buildings, information resources, and humans from disasters which include mould, fire outbreak, leakages of roof, water, war, rainstorm, theft and windstorm that may affect the library buildings and information resources. These measures include prevention preparedness, response and recovery. Nevertheless, disaster management typically consists of four distinct phases. These include mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery:

- i. Mitigation phase involves the activity aimed at minimizing disasters before they occur. Mitigation measures may include things like building codes, land use planning and hazard, mapping, which help identify potential risks, vulnerabilities, and develop strategies to mitigate them.
- ii. Preparedness phase involves activities aimed at preparing for a disaster. Preparedness measures may include developing emergency response plans, training staff and stakeholders, conducting regular drills and stockpiling emergency supplies.

- iii. Response phase is the activity aimed at responding to disaster when it occurs. Response measures may include things like activating emergency plans, evacuating affected areas, providing medical assistance and coordinating with external agencies.
- iv. Recovery is the activity aimed at returning the affected information resources and other related materials to normalcy after a disaster. Recovery measures may include providing temporary housing, restoring infrastructure and services and providing mental health support. Effective disaster management requires collaboration between various stakeholders, including government agencies, community organizations, emergency services and the public. This implies that librarians should take disaster management seriously in order to achieve its purpose. However, librarians must also implement disaster management plan.

In addition, disaster management as an essential aspect of the functioning of university libraries, involves planning, preparation and response towards various disasters such as flood, earthquake, fire outbreak as well as human-made disasters which include theft, vandalism or cyber-attack which may occur. Librarians also believed that the physical buildings, humans and material resources are susceptible to disaster such as fire outbreak, flood, water, war, theft, rodents, pests, rainstorm, leakages of roof, mould and windstorm. In view of the above, librarians should always have good perception regarding disaster management, because recovery is difficult.

Perception is the opinion, belief, or understanding about a situation. Hornby (2020) defined perception as the study of environment through human senses. Accordingly, Ilo, Nkiko, Izuagbe and Furfuri (2020) opined that perception is the cognitive, comprehension, individual, and understanding of any subject matter whether positive, or negative; high or low. Similarly, perception of librarians is the opinion or understanding about the effects of disaster management in university libraries in south –south, Nigeria. Therefore, university libraries should continue to ensure adequate provision of funds, training and seminar for effective disaster management.

Accordingly, librarians perceived disaster management as an ongoing process that requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and improvement. In this same vein, librarians perceived disaster management as an essential aspect of the functioning of university libraries. Consequently, disaster management improves if the perception of librarians is positive. Additionally, university libraries' conditions may affect librarians' perception towards disaster management. These conditions may include ventilation, lighting system, sunlight, library facilities, a spacious workspace and security. Thus, a good workplace enhances disaster management. In light of the above, librarians should ensure adequate protection and preservation of the library buildings, information resources, and other related materials. However, this may be achieved through adequate provision of funds

Statement of the Problem

The need for disaster management in university libraries is very vital. It is a preservative measure undertaken by librarians to rescue information resources, library buildings and other related materials such as computers, printers, scanners, photocopiers and furniture which include students reading tables and chairs, staff office tables and chairs, shelves, trolleys and binding equipment, which are essential for the development of academic system from disasters.

Preliminary observation by the researchers revealed that millions of the library resources are sometimes destroyed by either man-made or natural disaster such as flood, fire outbreak, leakages of roof, rainstorm, windstorm, theft, rodents, pests, earthquake, terrorism,

war and mould. These affect the safety of the library buildings, collections and equipment which could lead to loss of current and relevant information. The loss of these resources could be devastating and capital intensive. Nevertheless, the existence of these resources may be prolonged through disaster management with the help of adequate funds.

Unfortunately, the level which disaster management is practised in Nigeria university libraries is very low. For instance, observation revealed that Wellspring University Library building in Benin City, Edo State, was completely burnt down by fire in 2021. Valuables such as information resources and other related materials worth billions of naira were consumed by the fire outbreak. This occurred because the disaster was not properly managed by the librarians of the Well-spring university libraries. Consequently, the study was set out to empirically investigate the impact of librarians' perception towards disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study was to investigate the impact of librarians' perception towards disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria. It is specifically set out to:

- i. determine the extent of disaster management as perceived by the librarians in university libraries in south- south, Nigeria;
- ii. find out the perception of librarians regarding disaster management in the university libraries;

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the extent of disaster management as perceived by the librarians in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the perception of librarians regarding disaster management in the university libraries?

Research Hypothesis

- i. There is no significant relationship between librarian's perception and disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Extent of Disaster Management as Perceived by the Librarians in the University Libraries

The information resources housed by university libraries are essential. As such, disaster management needs to be taken seriously by the librarians in south-south, Nigeria to preserve the resources from destruction. Disaster management is a managerial measure adopted by librarians to preserve, prevent and protect information resources, library buildings and human beings from risk or hazards such as windstorm, rainstorm, flood, earthquake, mould, fire outbreak, war, theft, leakages of roof and mutilation. Mahmood (2023) reported that substantial number of the librarians in university libraries investigated in the north-east geopolitical zone, Nigeria were aware of the technologies use for disaster management. Alfredo (2017) defined disaster management as the capability to mitigate the threat that arise from disasters in order to reduce the overall damage they cause. Although disasters are often unpredictable, it is critical to regularly assess potential threats and have a concrete plan in place to address any damage that occurs.

Chakrabarti and Pramanik (2017) described disaster management as a "programme that focuses on risk reduction." The author argued that effective disaster management requires proper planning as well as cooperation and communication between authority and staff members. Disaster management involves not only responding to disasters and providing relief to those affected but also minimizing the negative impact of the event and preventing its recurrence in the future. Furthermore, Adadu, Aba, and Ugah (2018) viewed disaster management as an organized, deliberate effort to control planned or unplanned events.

According to Das and Paramanik (2018), disaster management refers to the range of activities carried out by librarians to control disaster and emergency situations, providing a framework to support those at risk to prevent or recover from disasters. To preserve or safeguard library buildings and their contents, librarians should possess sufficient knowledge and skills in disaster management. A study by Ngewa (2020) revealed that, disaster management involves preparing for disaster and encompasses other areas such as risk assessment, training, and funding required for implementation.

According to Oluwatola et al (2015), disaster management involves continuous planning, risk assessment, training and financing for effective implementation to minimize disasters. Disaster management helps prevent disasters, eliminates fear, and damage, ensures proper decision-making, reduces destruction of information resources, and limits recovery costs if a disaster occurs. Rehman (2014) revealed that the importance of disaster management is due to the value of information materials and services offered. Chakrabarti and Pramanik (2017) revealed that disaster management may minimize the occurrence of disasters and improve disaster response activity for the future. It is crucial for librarians to take disaster management seriously as the lack of disaster management may negatively impact information resources, library buildings and services.

Perception of Librarians regarding Disaster Management in University Libraries

University libraries play a crucial role in educational development. They are responsible for selecting, acquiring, processing, organizing, maintaining, storing and providing access to information resources while also protecting them from potential damages. Disaster management is an essential technique employed by librarians to safeguard the existence of information resources. According to Himachal Pradesh States Disaster

Management Authority (2020), disaster management activities include prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. The absence or inadequate practice of these activities may lead to natural or human-made disasters affecting library buildings, information resources, and human lives. Therefore, it is imperative for librarians to improve their work attitude to enhance disaster management.

Librarians believe that disaster management consciousness is crucial to prolong existence of library buildings and resources. Ilo, *et al* (2020) reported that disaster preparedness is beyond the scope of libraries to undertake alone due to financial, technical and other considerations. The authors also stressed that disaster management is expensive and not worth the effort. Consequently, Abareh (2014) revealed that poor perception of disaster preparedness among librarians has led to damages to library buildings and information resources during emergencies. Oluwatola *et al* (2015) reported that lack of interest in disaster preparedness activities has adversely affected the preservation of library resources in university libraries.

Ishola (2017) reported that the problems of preservation and disaster management in academic libraries in Nigeria is due to inadequate staff training on preservation resulting in low perception among librarians towards preservation and conservation of library collections. Ismail, Shuhidan, Kiran and Samsuddin (2023) revealed that academic libraries in Malaysia are perceived to have a strategy and plans to respond to disaster crises. Unfortunately, lack a formal disaster management plan. Accordingly, Selin and Devi (2024) reported that library professionals possess an awareness of disasters and the necessity for preparedness, yet, there was a gap in translating the knowledge into practical implementation. However, Ilo, *et al* (2020) revealed that libraries rated disaster preparedness activities low which may affect librarians' general perception on disasters. Additionally, the authors revealed that librarians' perception is one of the challenges confronting disaster management in Nigerian libraries. Hence, disaster management should be a top priority for any library that wants to survive in Nigeria. This is because, recovery is difficult after the occurrence of disaster.

Research Methods

This study adopted a survey research design. 402 academic librarians and library officers were the population of the study from federal and state university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Sample size was 402 respondents. Structured questionnaire, titled, Questionnaire on the impact of Librarians' Perception towards Disaster Management in University Libraries in south-south, Nigeria was used to obtain information for the study. Response rate of 401 (99.8%) was recorded and used for data analysis. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages (%), statistical mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) to answer research questions while the null hypothesis was tested using Pearson moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 level of significant.

Research Question One: What is the extent of disaster management as perceived by the librarians in the university libraries?

Data in Table 1 provide answer to this question.

Table 1: Extent of Disaster Management as Perceived by the Librarians in the University Libraries

	4	3	2	1		
Extent of Disaster Management	Very High Extent	High Extent	Low Extent	Very Low Extent	Mean	SD
Disaster management helps to prevent loss of lives and deviation of properties in my library	113	238	40	10	3.13	0.07
Disaster management is important because of the value of information materials and the services offered to users in my library	113	249	28	10	3.16	0.07
Belief that disaster prevention help to alleviate suffering and lessen damages and loss in my library	142	216	35	8	3.23	0.08
Belief that disaster prevention help to avoid repetition of past mistakes in my library	165	197	30	9	3.29	0.08
Disaster prevention assist in reducing ill effects of disasters such as rise in temperature resulting from rain, theft, water, electrical spark, power surge, glacierment and expansion of ocean in my library	169	185	41	6	3.29	0.08
Disaster preparedness helps to reduce panic, fear, anxiety, sadness, depression, financial implications and anger in my library	177	180	36	8	3.31	0.08
Disaster response helps to rescue human lives, information resources and the entire environment in my library	182	161	47	11	3.28	0.08
Disaster recovery assist in restoring damaged equipment, physical buildings as well as human lives to normal in my library	184	178	30	9	3.34	0.08
Disaster management plan helps in managing disasters in my library	186	175	26	14	3.33	0.08
Disaster management plan helps to minimize damages to collections in my	91	278	24	8	3.13	0.07

library	
Aggregate Mean	3.13
Criterion Mean	2.50

Table 1 shows the statistical mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) of the responses of the respondents on extent of disaster management. Therefore, with an aggregate mean of 3.13, it can be concluded that the extent of disaster management which include disaster recovery assists in restoring damaged equipment and the physical buildings as well as human lives to normalcy (\bar{x} = 3.34), SD = 0.08; disaster management plan helps in managing disasters (\bar{x} = 3.33), SD = 0.08; disaster prevention helps to avoid repetition of past mistakes (\bar{x} = 3.29), SD = 0.08; disaster response helps to rescue human lives, information resources and the entire environment (\bar{x} = 3.28), SD = 0.08; disaster management plan helps to minimize damages to collections (\bar{x} = 3.13), SD = 0.07; and disaster management helps to prevent loss of lives and deviation of in properties (\bar{x} = 3.13), SD = 0.07; in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria, is high.

Research Question Two: What is the perception of librarians regarding disaster management in the university libraries?

Data in Table 2 provide answer to this question.

Table 2: Perception of Librarians regarding Disaster Management in the University Libraries

	4	3	2	1		
Perception of librarians	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean	SD
Disaster management is broad for university libraries to undertake alone in my library	112	250	23	16	3.14	0.07
Disaster management is very expensive	114	267	14	6	3.22	0.08
Disaster management is important due to the value of information resources in my library	140	235	17	9	3.26	0.08
Disaster rarely occur in my library to require disaster management	92	250	40	19	3.03	0.07
Disaster hardly destroy library buildings and its resources even when it occurs in my library	106	210	63	22	3.00	0.07

Aggregate Mean	3.13
Criterion Mean	2.50

Table 2 shows statistical mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) of responses of the respondents on perception of librarians regarding disaster management. Therefore, with an aggregate mean of 3.13, it can be concluded that the perception of librarians regarding disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria is positive. Their perception include: disaster management is important due to the value of information resources in the library, ($\bar{x} = 3.26$), SD=0.08; disaster management is very expensive ($\bar{x} = 3.22$), SD=0.08; disaster management is broad for university libraries to undertake alone ($\bar{x} = 3.14$), SD = 0.07; disaster rarely occur in the library such that it will require disaster management ($\bar{x} = 3.03$), SD = 0.07; and disaster may hardly destroy library buildings and its resources even when it occur ($\bar{x} = 3.00$), SD = 0.07. This shows that, majority of the respondents are of the opinion that disaster management important due to the value of information resources. This is because the item has the highest mean of 3.26, and standard deviation of 0.08.

Discussion of the Findings

This section reported the findings arising from the study and discussed them with respect of the previous studies.

Extent of Disaster Management in the University Libraries as Perceived by the Librarians

The finding revealed that, the extent of disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria, with an aggregate mean of 3.13, which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, is high. Consequently, the respondents agreed that disaster recovery assists in restoring damaged equipment, physical buildings as well as lives; disaster management plan helps in managing disasters, prevention helps to avoid repetition of past mistakes, disaster response helps to rescue lives, information resources and the entire environment and disaster management is important because of the value of information materials and the services offered to users.

The finding is in agreement with that of Chakrabarti and Pramanik (2017) which revealed that disaster management helps to minimize the response of mistakes done previously and also improves disaster response activity for the future. The finding is also in line with that of Rehman (2014) which reported that disaster management is important because of the value of the information materials, services offered to users in libraries and security measures which may be affected. Therefore, librarians in university libraries in south- south, Nigeria, should always take disaster management seriously, because recovery is difficult.

Perception of Librarians regarding Disaster Management in the University Libraries

On perception of librarians regarding disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria, the finding revealed that librarians have positive perception on disaster management, with an aggregate mean of 3.13, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. The respondents perceived that disaster management is important due to the value of information resources disaster management is very expensive, disaster management is broad for university to undertake alone disaster rarely occur in university libraries, such that it requires disaster management; and disaster may hardly destroy library buildings and its resources even when it occur.

The finding is in line with that of Ilo, et al (2020) which revealed that disaster preparedness is beyond the precinct of the libraries to undertake alone due to financial, technical and other considerations. The finding further revealed that disaster preparedness is too broad as an activity to be undertaken by university libraries and also revealed that disaster management is expensive and does not worth the stress. In view of the above, library management should ensure that adequate fund is provided to manage disasters in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria, because recovery is difficult.

Conclusion

The study focused on the impact of librarians' perception towards disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria. The study provided empirical data on variables that predicted disaster management in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria. The findings further revealed that perception of librarians influenced disaster management in university libraries. In view of the above, librarians in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria, should continue to have good perception towards disaster management. This may be achieved through adequate provision of funds, training, and seminar.

Recommendations

In view of the findings, the study recommended the following:

- i. Librarians in university libraries in south- south, Nigeria, should always take disaster management seriously as this would help to prolong the existence of the library buildings and its resources. This may be achieved through positive perception of librarians and the presence of disaster management plan
- ii. Librarians in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria, should always have good perception towards disaster management. This may be achieved through adequate provision of funds, training and seminars.

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