

## Disaster Management Practices in two Academic Libraries in South Western Nigeria

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#### ABSTRACT

Disasters pose significant threats to the sustainability of academic libraries, often resulting in loss of resources, disruption of services, and safety concerns for staff and users. Despite growing awareness of disaster risks, many Nigerian academic libraries remain ill-prepared for effective disaster management. This study investigated disaster preparedness and management practices in two academic libraries in South-Western Nigeria, focusing on a population of 87 librarians. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) were used to analyse the responses. Findings revealed that although librarians were highly aware of potential disasters such as fire, flooding, and digital system failures, disaster preparedness in both libraries remained largely reactive. Preventive measures, such as fire extinguishers and CCTV systems, were available, but neither institution had a written disaster management policy or conducted regular drills. Key challenges identified included inadequate funding, lack of staff training, and weak institutional commitment to disaster risk reduction. The study concluded that awareness of disaster risks alone is insufficient to ensure preparedness, particularly in the absence of policies, training, and financial investment. It recommended the development of comprehensive disaster management frameworks, regular staff training and drills, dedicated budgetary allocations, inter-institutional collaboration, and integration of disaster preparedness into librarians' professional development. Strengthening disaster resilience in academic libraries is essential to safeguard information resources, ensure service continuity, and align with global disaster risk reduction strategies.

#### KEYWORDS

- Academic libraries
- Disaster management
- Disaster preparedness
- Librarians
- Risk reduction

## Introduction

Disaster preparedness in libraries refers to the systematic processes and measures taken to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from both natural and human-induced hazards that threaten library collections, facilities, staff, and services (Aboyade et al., 2021). Disasters in the library context range from fires, floods, theft, and pest infestations to digital threats such as system crashes, ransomware, and cyber-attacks (Ijiekhuamhen et al., 2020). Disaster management, therefore, encompasses pre-disaster planning, risk reduction, training, response coordination, and post-disaster recovery (Fatade et al., 2023). Academic libraries are custodians of knowledge and cultural heritage. Their vulnerability to disasters underscores the need for disaster risk management to be integrated into library governance and policy (IFLA, 2023). Globally, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2015) advocates preparedness, resilience, and recovery planning, principles that can be adapted by libraries to safeguard resources and ensure service continuity.

Academic libraries in Nigeria operate in an environment where both rapid- and slow-onset hazards, like fire, flooding, power surges, pest infestation, mould, and cyber incidents, can interrupt services and endanger collections, people, and infrastructure. The international policy context underscores a proactive stance against disaster; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015 – 2030) identifies four priorities: understanding risk, strengthening risk governance, investing in resilience, and enhancing preparedness; which are directly applicable to library disaster planning (UNDRR, 2015). In Nigeria, recent experiences have reinforced the urgency of preparedness. The 2022 floods, among the country's most devastating in a decade, produced widespread human, economic, and infrastructure losses. A joint assessment by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) revealed low household recovery rates across six affected States, underscoring systemic vulnerability and the importance of disaster readiness across all institutions, including libraries (NBS, NEMA, & UNDP, 2023). National policy instruments, such as the National Disaster Risk Management Policy and the National Contingency Plan, provide frameworks that compel organisations, including academic libraries, to establish context-specific disaster management strategies (NEMA, 2018; NEMA, 2021).

Within library and information science scholarship, empirical studies consistently highlight preparedness gaps. Aboyade, Kolajo, Popoola, Agbetuyi, and Adetunji (2021) found that

many academic libraries in South-Western Nigeria lacked updated written disaster plans, while available mitigation measures were inconsistently deployed. Similarly, Ijiekhuamhen, Omosekejimi, and Rhima (2020) reported that although some libraries have fire extinguishers and smoke detectors, they lacked sufficient routine drills, staff training, and structured disaster response teams, as these were not widespread. A more recent study by Fatade, Ajiboye, and Ogunjimi (2023) confirmed that although disaster preparedness and security management in two South-West Nigerian academic libraries were “affirmative,” significant challenges such as inadequate equipment and low sensitisation of staff persisted. At the global level, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2023) has urged libraries to align with the Sendai priorities by safeguarding collections, ensuring continuity of access, and engaging in disaster-risk reduction activities. Contemporary interpretations of Sendai, such as those presented by Yousefi-Khoshsabegheh et al. (2024), emphasise the necessity of locally adapted implementation in developing contexts, where limited resources often constrain effective preparedness.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates disaster preparedness and management practices in two academic libraries in South-Western Nigeria (University of Lagos, UNILAG and Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, FUNNAB), using the entire population of 87 librarians as respondents. The study focuses on assessing perceived hazards, the availability and implementation of disaster plans, the adequacy of equipment, staff preparedness, and post-incident learning practices. By situating its analysis within both national disaster frameworks (NEMA) and international risk reduction principles (UNDRR, 2015; IFLA, 2023), the study seeks to provide actionable, context-sensitive recommendations for strengthening resilience and sustaining knowledge services in Nigerian academic libraries. Ultimately, disaster preparedness is mission-critical for academic libraries. Effective planning not only safeguards collections and infrastructure but also ensures continuity of access to information and preserves institutional memory, thereby sustaining the academic mission in the face of crises.

Thus, the research objectives include:

- i. Ascertain the level of awareness of disaster management in the academic libraries;
- ii. Determine the level of availability of disaster preparedness plan and equipment;
- iii. Ascertain the librarians’ level of involvement in disaster preparedness practices;
- iv. Ascertain the challenges affecting disaster management.

## Literature Review

Globally, several studies have assessed disaster management in academic and research libraries. Shenton and Hay-Gibson (2020) noted that libraries in the UK have increasingly integrated disaster risk assessments into strategic planning, though gaps in digital disaster preparedness remain. In the United States of America, Varlamoff (2019) observed that most university libraries have written disaster plans but face challenges of inadequate training and budgetary constraints. IFLA (2023) highlights that libraries worldwide must embed disaster planning into operational routines and invest in both physical and digital preservation infrastructures.

Studies in Nigeria reveal significant gaps in disaster management. Aboyade et al. (2021) reported that only a small proportion of university libraries in South-Western Nigeria had comprehensive disaster management plans, and those available were often outdated. Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2020) found that while basic fire extinguishers and smoke detectors were present in some libraries, preventive maintenance and routine staff trainings were irregular. Similarly, Fatade et al. (2023) found that librarians acknowledged the existence of preparedness strategies but rated their implementation as insufficient, with inadequate funding and limited awareness among staff. In addition, studies by Popoola and Bello (2022) observed that cyber threats are increasingly recognised as a critical dimension of disaster preparedness, yet Nigerian libraries have been slow in implementing robust digital risk management practices. These findings collectively suggest that while Nigerian academic libraries recognise disaster risks, actual preparedness and resilience measures remain underdeveloped.

The literature identifies several barriers to effective disaster management in libraries. First, funding constraints limit investment in infrastructure, training, and equipment (Fatade et al., 2023). Second, low awareness and poor risk perception among library staff often undermine proactive engagement (Aboyade et al., 2021). Third, absence of formal disaster policies and inadequate integration into institutional governance structures reduce accountability (Ijiekhuamhen et al., 2020). Fourth, the increasing digital dimension of disasters, including ransomware attacks and loss of electronic records, presents new challenges that are often overlooked (Popoola & Bello, 2022).

## Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), propounded by Rogers (1975). It explains how individuals are motivated to protect themselves against perceived

risks when they believe they have the resources and knowledge to do so (Floyd et al., 2000). Within the library setting, librarians' perception of risk and their confidence in institutional preparedness influence their engagement in disaster management practices.

From the reviewed literature, limited attention is given to staff knowledge, attitudes, and practices in shaping institutional readiness; there is a paucity of studies that situate Nigerian library practices within both national disaster management frameworks (NEMA policies) and global frameworks like the Sendai Framework. This study addresses these gaps by comparatively examining disaster preparedness and management practices in two academic libraries in South-Western Nigeria, using the total population of 87 librarians as respondents.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised all 87 librarians (47 from University of Lagos, UNILAG and 40 from Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, FUNAAB). Since the population size was relatively small and manageable, the study adopted total enumeration. A structured questionnaire was the instrument for data collection, measured on a five-point Likert scale. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in library and information science as well as a disaster management specialist from the University of Lagos. For reliability, a pre-test was conducted with 25 librarians from Federal University of Technology Akure. The analysis of the data yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument (George & Mallery, 2019).

The copies of the questionnaire were administered physically by the researchers with the assistance of research assistants within the two libraries. Prior to administration, approval was obtained from the management of both institutions, and informed consent was sought from each participant. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and participation was voluntary. Completed copies of the questionnaire were coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise responses and address the research objectives. The results were presented in tables for clarity and ease of interpretation.

## Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Out of the 87 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 83 were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 95.4%.

**Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N = 83)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40	48.2
	Female	43	51.8
Age (years)	21 – 30	15	18.1
	31 – 40	28	33.7
	41 – 50	26	31.3
	51 and above	14	16.9
Qualification	BLIS	23	27.7
	MLIS	50	60.2
	PhD	10	12.0
Years of Experience	1 – 5	20	24.1
	6 – 10	25	30.1
	11 – 15	22	26.5
	16 and above	16	19.3

The table indicates that female librarians slightly outnumbered males (51.8% vs. 48.2%). Most respondents were aged 31–40 years (33.7%) and possessed a MLIS degree (60.2%).

**Table 2: Awareness of Disaster Preparedness and Management**

Statement	Mean (x)	S.D	Remark
I am aware of the existence of disaster preparedness strategies in my library	3.96	0.82	Agree
I have received training on disaster preparedness and management	3.10	1.12	Agree
I am knowledgeable about types of disasters that can affect the library	4.15	0.73	Agree
I know the procedures to follow in the event of a disaster	3.45	0.95	Agree

The results showed that librarians demonstrated high awareness of the types of disasters that could affect libraries, with a mean score of 4.15. However, awareness of disaster preparedness training and procedural steps was only moderate (mean = 3.10 and 3.45, respectively). This finding aligns with earlier studies by Aboyade et al. (2021) and Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2020), which observed that while librarians were generally conscious of risks such as fire, flood, and theft, their practical preparedness and involvement in structured training programs remained limited. From the perspective of Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) (Rogers, 1975; Floyd et al., 2000), this partial awareness may reflect a gap in librarians' perception of their efficacy in responding to disasters. Although they recognise the

threats, insufficient knowledge of procedures may lower their motivation to engage in preparedness practices. This suggests a need for stronger institutional investment in awareness campaigns and training workshops to enhance librarians' perceived response efficacy.

**Table 3: Availability of Disaster Preparedness Plans and Equipment**

Resource / Facility	Yes (%)	No (%)
Written disaster management plan	32 (38.6)	51 (61.4)
Fire extinguishers and smoke detectors	54 (65.1)	29 (34.9)
CCTV / security cameras	60 (72.3)	23 (27.7)
Backup servers / cloud storage	34 (41.0)	49 (59.0)
First aid kits and evacuation signage	45 (54.2)	38 (45.8)

The study found that only 38.6% of librarians reported the existence of a written disaster management plan in their libraries, despite the presence of basic facilities such as fire extinguishers (65.1%) and CCTV (72.3%). This outcome is consistent with Fatade et al. (2023), who reported that disaster preparedness strategies in Nigerian academic libraries were “affirmative but limited,” often lacking formalised documentation and systematic implementation. The absence of written plans undermines the principle of risk governance as emphasized by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2015). Risk Management Theory (Hopkin, 2018) also stresses that identifying, documenting, and monitoring risks are fundamental to effective disaster preparedness. The gap between physical equipment availability and the absence of guiding policies demonstrates a reactive rather than proactive approach to disaster management in these libraries.

**Table 4: Librarians' Involvement in Disaster Preparedness Practices**

Activity	Mean (x)	S.D	Remark
Participation in disaster management trainings/workshops	2.95	1.08	Neutral
Participation in mock drills or simulations	2.60	1.12	Disagree
Contribution to drafting or reviewing disaster plans	2.80	1.00	Neutral
Knowledge of assigned roles during emergencies	3.25	0.89	Agree

The results revealed low participation in training, drills, and plan development (mean scores below 3.00), although librarians moderately agreed that they knew their roles during emergencies (mean = 3.25). This echoes findings by Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2020), who noted that staff in many Nigerian libraries had limited opportunities to participate in disaster simulations. Shenton and Hay-Gibson (2020) similarly observed in the UK that without

regular drills, even written plans fail to translate into effective preparedness. In line with PMT, this finding indicates that while librarians may cognitively recognise disaster risks, low engagement in preparedness activities weakens both their perceived response efficacy and actual coping capacity. Therefore, a more participatory model of disaster planning, where staffs contribute actively to policy design, drills, and evaluations, is needed to bridge the gap between awareness and action.

**Table 5: Challenges Affecting Disaster Preparedness and Management**

Challenges	Yes (%)	No (%)
Inadequate funding	60 (72.3)	23 (27.7)
Lack of formal disaster policy	51 (61.4)	32 (38.6)
Insufficient staff training	58 (69.9)	25 (30.1)
Poor maintenance of facilities	45 (54.2)	38 (45.8)
Low awareness among staff	41 (49.4)	42 (50.6)

The most critical barriers identified were inadequate funding (72.3%), insufficient training (69.9%), and the absence of formal disaster policies (61.4%). These constraints mirror those reported in previous studies across Nigerian academic libraries (Aboyade et al., 2021; Fatade et al., 2023; Popoola & Bello, 2022). Globally, Varlamoff (2019) also emphasised that even libraries with disaster plans often struggle with financial limitations and the prioritisation of preparedness activities. The findings further highlight that while basic security infrastructure may be present, systemic barriers, especially lack of financial resources and policy direction, undermine sustainable preparedness. This is consistent with the risk governance gap highlighted by IFLA (2023) in its midterm review of the Sendai Framework, which stressed the importance of aligning institutional practices with broader policy frameworks.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined disaster management practices in two academic libraries in South-Western Nigeria. While the librarians are aware of potential disaster, they were not practically prepared in cases of eventualities. The librarians lacked adequate trainings, drills, and developed policy on disaster management, save a few, yet inadequate disaster-mitigating facilities present in both libraries. Disaster management in the academic libraries were reactive rather than proactive, suggesting that awareness of risks alone does not guarantee protective action unless individuals perceive themselves as capable of responding effectively. To effectively launch any proactive measures to disaster management in academic libraries, there is a need for institutions to create a holistic and sustainable disaster preparedness culture. Without written plans, regular drills, adequate funding, and institutionalised training,

libraries remain vulnerable to disasters that can threaten information resources, staff safety, and service continuity. The implication is clear: for libraries in Nigeria to achieve resilience and sustainability in the face of disasters, disaster preparedness must shift from an ad-hoc, equipment-based approach to a comprehensive, policy-driven, and participatory framework that empowers librarians and safeguards information assets.

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Based on the high awareness of disasters that could affect libraries, but a moderate level of awareness of disaster preparedness training and procedural steps, library management should organise periodic workshops, simulations, and drills to enhance staff knowledge and practical skills in disaster response. This will help strengthen librarians' self-efficacy and coping capacity.
- ii. Based on the low level of availability of disaster preparedness plans and equipment, library management should urgently develop and implement written disaster preparedness and management policies. These policies should cover risk assessment, response protocols, recovery procedures, and periodic reviews.
- iii. Because of the low level of involvement of librarians in disaster preparedness practices, library management should collaborate through professional associations like NLA to share resources, expertise, and best practices in disaster management. Joint training programmes and resource pooling can help mitigate financial and infrastructural constraints.
- iv. In order to combat the challenges affecting disaster management, library management should establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to periodically assess the state of disaster preparedness. This includes reviewing the functionality of equipment, the relevance of disaster plans, and staff readiness levels. Regular evaluations will help identify gaps early and guide improvements.

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