

Disaster Preparedness in University Libraries in Abia State, Nigeria: Threats and Mitigation Measures

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Abstract

This study investigates major threats to library operations and disaster preparedness measures adopted by Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU) and Abia State University (ABSU) libraries in Abia State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 108 library staff through a structured questionnaire, analyzed with mean scores and a criterion mean of 2.50. Findings show that fire outbreaks, students' riots, thefts, vandalism, mutilation, roof leakages, flooding, biological agents and power failures are perceived as significant threats, whereas earthquakes are not considered relevant. Disaster preparedness measures include good drainage systems, routine infrastructure checks, regular surveillance, CCTV installation, fumigation, antivirus software, online backups, backup electricity and fire safety installations. However, staff and user training on disaster preparedness is lacking. The study concludes that while physical and technological safeguards exist, human capacity development remains inadequate. It recommends systematic staff training, policy reinforcement, infrastructural maintenance and technology integration to enhance disaster readiness.

Keywords: Disaster preparedness, university libraries, Abia State, threats, preventive measures

1. Introduction

University libraries in Nigeria serve as critical hubs for learning, research and cultural preservation, housing both physical and digital resources that are indispensable for academic growth. However, these institutions operate in environments that are vulnerable to both natural and human-induced disasters such as fire outbreaks, flooding, vandalism, thefts and civil unrest. Such events can cause irreparable loss of resources, disrupt academic activities and undermine the educational mission of the parent institution.

Disaster preparedness in libraries refers to the strategic actions taken to prevent, mitigate and respond to potential hazards. It combines infrastructural safeguards, technological systems and human capacity development to ensure service continuity. In Nigeria, however, preparedness efforts are often constrained by inadequate funding, outdated infrastructure and the absence of structured training programs. Ugwuanyi, Ugwu, and Ezema (2022) highlight that infrastructural decay and poor maintenance aggravate the risks of flooding and fire, while Oyeniran (2023) underscores that even well-equipped libraries are vulnerable when staff lack disaster response skills.

Globally, research underscores the importance of an integrated approach. Eden and Mathews (2023) emphasize that effective preparedness requires both technical safeguards and regular drills.

Similarly, the experience of Philippine academic libraries during Typhoon Haiyan (Superior, Alayon, & Oliveros, 2021) shows that libraries with clear disaster policies and trained staff recover faster and more effectively.

Against this backdrop, this study focuses on two public universities in Abia State—Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU), and Abia State University (ABSU)—to identify the major threats they face and assess the disaster preparedness measures in place. The findings aim to provide actionable insights for strengthening disaster management strategies in Nigerian academic libraries.

2. Objectives

1. To identify major threats that could potentially cause disasters in MOUUAU and ABSU libraries.
2. To ascertain disaster preparedness measures adopted in MOUUAU and ABSU libraries.

3. Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used. The population consisted of 120 librarians in MOUUAU and ABSU. No sampling was done as the entire population was studied. Data were collected using the Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plan in Academic Libraries Questionnaire (DPARPIALQ). Responses were analyzed using mean scores with a criterion mean of 2.50 as the threshold for acceptance.

4. Results

Table 1: Possible Causes of Disaster in the Library (n = 108)

Cause	Mean	Decision
Fire outbreaks	3.50	Accept
Roof leakages	3.26	Accept
Students' riots	3.56	Accept
Biological agents	3.25	Accept
Thefts	3.50	Accept
Vandalism	3.37	Accept
Mutilation	3.44	Accept
Floods	3.31	Accept
Earthquakes	1.91	Reject
Power failures	3.33	Accept
Grand Mean	3.24	Accept

Table 2: Disaster Preparedness Measures Adopted (n = 108)

Measure	Mean	Decision
Staff/user training on preparedness	2.05	Reject
Good drainage system	3.26	Accept
Routine leak inspections	3.15	Accept
Electrical checks	3.11	Accept
Surveillance against thefts/mutilation	3.50	Accept
CCTV installation	3.17	Accept
Routine fumigation	3.04	Accept
Antivirus software	2.67	Accept
Online backups	3.02	Accept
Backup electricity	3.17	Accept
Fire extinguishers/sand buckets	3.26	Accept
Fire alarms/emergency exits	3.34	Accept
Lightning protectors	3.07	Accept
Grand Mean	3.06	Accept

5. Discussion

The identification of fire outbreaks, students' riots, thefts, vandalism and mutilation as significant threats aligns with earlier findings by Abdulsalami, Okezie, and Agbo (2024) and Oyeniran (2023) who reported similar patterns in Nigerian university libraries. Flooding and roof leakages reflect infrastructural weaknesses as noted by Ugwuanyi et al. (2015) who warned that inadequate building maintenance increases disaster susceptibility. The acknowledgment of biological agents as risks corresponds with Alagbeleye's (2021) observation that tropical climates encourage mold and pest infestations.

Preparedness measures such as good drainage, CCTV surveillance, regular inspections and online backups match Nwokedi, Panle, and Samuel's (2022) findings that Nigerian libraries tend to invest more in physical and technological infrastructure than in training. The low score for staff/user training reflects a critical gap, confirming Mary's (2023) assertion that equipment without trained operators is insufficient for effective disaster response. International evidence, such as Eden and Matthews (2023), strongly suggests that staff preparedness is the key determinant of resilience during emergencies.

6. Conclusion

MOUUAU and ABSU libraries demonstrate moderate preparedness for disasters with an emphasis on infrastructural and technological measures. However, the lack of systematic training reduces the overall effectiveness of their disaster management strategies.

7. Recommendations

- Implement structured training programs – Conduct periodic workshops and drills for staff and users to enhance readiness. Trained personnel respond more effectively during emergencies (Eden & Matthews, 2023).
- Reinforce preventive maintenance – Regular inspections of roofs, drainages and electrical systems should be institutionalized to prevent infrastructural-triggered disasters (Ugwuanyi et al., 2022).
- Adopt comprehensive disaster policies – Policies should clearly define responsibilities, emergency procedures and recovery plans to ensure a coordinated response.
- Expand surveillance coverage – Increase CCTV installations and security patrols to deter thefts and vandalism (Oyewole & Adeola, 2021).
- Strengthen digital preservation – Use both on-site and off-site backups, including cloud storage, to safeguard electronic resources.
- Secure external funding – Partner with government agencies, NGO's and private donors to fund equipment acquisition and staff development.

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