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UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

# AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE AWARENESS, OCCURRENCE AND PREPAREDNESS FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN SELECTED ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN TANZANIA, EAST AFRICA

By

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the awareness, occurrence and preparedness to manage disaster in selected academic libraries in Tanzania. The study was conducted with a view to addressing the inefficiency in library disaster management and offers some suggestions on how to prepare before, during and after a disaster strikes in the library. Survey research technique was used to obtain data for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 83 workers in the two libraries used for the study, because the responsibility for effective disaster management is collective. All the workers in the libraries were sampled because the population size is small. Five research questions guided the study and a questionnaire titled "Disaster Preparedness and Management Questionnaire" (DPMQ) containing 52 items was designed and administered to all the 84 members of staff used for this study. Fifty-one (51) copies out of 83 copies administered were returned, thus giving a respondent return rate of 61.4 per cent. The data collected were analyzed using percentages. The findings revealed that members of staff are aware of disaster in the library. However; there was no adequate preparation for its prevention and management. The study recommends that adequate funds should be provided to train staff, buy disaster kits, cultivate maintenance culture of the resources in the library, and create awareness, among others.*

**Key words:** *Disaster awareness, Disaster prevention, Disaster preparedness, Disaster management*

## Introduction

Academic libraries are libraries that are attached to tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Libraries from ages have been indispensable agents of information gathering, organising, storing, retrieval and dissemination. According to Aguolu (1983), university library is the most important organ in the institution. The academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any university depend largely upon the state of the health and excellence of its library, thus making it to be the heart of an academic institution. Academic library has been building a strong collection in the form of physical, electronic and digital to cater for teaching, learning, research and public services.

While library promotes the dissemination of research and enables networking among researchers; preserves valuable information resources and renders services to the public in general through its inestimable resources, disasters have been disrupting libraries ability to render effective and efficient services to their patrons. Ahenkorah-Marfo and Borteye (2010) opined that disaster is a common phenomenon, which sometimes comes unannounced and uninvited causing widespread destruction. Dhunna (2009) defined disaster as a wide spread destruction of life and property. Disaster is any incident which threatens human safety and, or damages, or threatens to damage, a library's buildings, collections, equipment and systems.

There are a number of academic libraries all over the world that have lost valuable collections to disaster. According to McMichael (2007), terrorism has become a major threat to libraries and other information centres with the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and

Tanzania simultaneously resulting to destruction of many resources including library resources. Disaster management is a matter of basic security for libraries, their staff and their collections. The danger associated with disasters therefore makes it imperative for the library to ensure that awareness, preparedness and management of disasters in academic libraries becomes an integral part of library management.

Library building, collections, equipment as well as human beings are subject to disasters, contributing to loss of precious materials and human lives. Hlabaangani and Mnjama (2008) categorised disaster into two, which are natural and man-made disasters. While natural disasters include floods, storms, hurricanes, blizzards, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, et cetera. Those of man-made disasters are armed conflicts, arson, fire, poor storage, war, theft, et cetera. While, some disasters can be prevented through conduction of routine inspections of facilities to see that conditions which invite disaster do not exist, some disasters such as bombings, war, arson, conflicts, terrorism, etc. cannot be prevented.

According to Topper (2008), academic libraries which are regarded as repositories of knowledge, safe and quiet places to conduct scholarly research are susceptible to hazards. Ngulube and Magazi (2006) are of the view that librarians often overlook disaster preparedness, which is the key to preservation management and protection of collections. According to Echezona, Ugwu and Ozioko (2010), inadequate facilities, inadequate fund allocation to libraries and lack of interest on the part of some librarians are some of the obstacles facing disaster management in university libraries in South Eastern Nigeria.

Tanzania is officially called the United Republic of Tanzania and is located in Eastern Africa between longitude 29° and 41° East, Latitude 1° and 12° South. It is bordered by Kenya and Uganda to the north; Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west; and Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the south. It has a population of 46,218,486 and the capital is in Dodoma. The United Republic of Tanzania was formed out of the union of two sovereign states namely Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Tanganyika became a sovereign state on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1961 and became a Republic the following year. Zanzibar became independent on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1963 and the People's Republic of Zanzibar was established after the revolution of 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1964. The two sovereign republics formed the United Republic of Tanzania on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1964. However, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is a unitary republic consisting of the Union Government and the Zanzibar Revolutionary Government.

The University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) which was chosen for this study is located in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's largest city and former capital. UDSM is the oldest and biggest public university in Tanzania and is situated on the western side of the city of Dar es Salaam, on 1,625 acres on the observation hill, and it is 13 kilometers from the city centre. UDSM was founded on the first of July 1970, through parliament act no. 12 of 1970 and all the enabling legal instruments of the constituent colleges. Prior to 1970, the university college, Dar es Salaam had started on 1st July 1961 as an affiliate college of the University of London. It had only the faculty of Law, with 14 students. In 1963 it became a constituent college of the university of East Africa together with Makerere University College in Uganda and Nairobi University College in Kenya. Since 1961, the University of Dar es Salaam has grown in terms of student intake, academic units and academic programmes.

The Library is the heart of the University of Dar es Salaam and it is an integral part of the University's mission which revolves around teaching, research and consultancy. It is also a legal depository for materials on Tanzania, including government publications, university

publications et cetera. Hence the need to safe guard the human and material resources in the libraries by investigating the extent to which awareness, occurrence and preparedness which are some the factors that promote effective and efficient management of disaster in the libraries are taken care of.

While the second university chosen, Kampala International University (KIU) is a chartered private University in Uganda, East Africa. KIU has established campuses in Kenya and Tanzania. Kampala International University Dar es Salaam Constituent College was established in 2009 in temporary premises in Quality Plaza along Nyerere Road. It moved to its permanent site on 100 acres of land at Gongola Mboto, Dar es Salaam in early 2010. The institution run various academic programmes in the college that lead to the award of; Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees in the fields of Management, Education, Social Sciences, Science and Technology, Engineering, Health Sciences and Law.

Nwankwo (1982) defines management as the utilisation of physical and human resources through co-operative efforts, and it is accomplished by performing the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. This management definition can be used for disaster management. This is because, a successful disaster management will involve using physical and human resources through co-operative efforts which can be achieved through adequate planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling.

Even though there is a wide and growing literature on disaster preparedness in libraries, in both developing and advanced countries, that of Tanzania is rare. Also, there is no study that investigated awareness, occurrence and preparedness as factors in disaster management in academic libraries in Tanzania. This type of study is necessary in order to guide against loss of human and material resources in academic libraries. It is against this background that the study investigated awareness, occurrence and preparedness as factors in disaster management in selected academic libraries in Tanzania.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Library is often referred to as the store house of knowledge. Libraries store treasures of inestimable value, which are often destroyed by potential disasters. These may cause damages to collections, buildings and even loss of lives if not addressed. The actions taken by libraries against the problems of disaster will naturally reflect the seriousness with which these problems are viewed within the library service. Disasters are unpredictable in their nature, occurrence, and severity. Ability to safeguard and preserve treasures in library holdings will go a long way in reducing the damage of the collections to the barest minimum no matter how the threats appear. An effective and efficient response to disaster can be achieved by a good disaster management. There is the need to evaluate disaster management strategies put in place in the academic libraries in Tanzania in order to determine the extent to which academic libraries are prepared for disaster management.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to find out the views of library staff about how disaster is being managed in the library. The specific objectives of the study are therefore to:

- i. examine the views of library staff on the likelihood of disaster in their libraries;
- ii. obtain views of library staff on the actual occurrence of disaster in their libraries;
- iii. find out the views of the library workers on the available measures put in place to avoid disaster in the library;
- iv. obtain views of library workers on the available measures put in place to safeguard

- and preserve human and material resources in the library; and
- v. suggest ways to improve disaster management in the library.

### Research Questions

- i. To what extent is library staff aware that disaster can happen in the library?
- ii. What are the library staff opinions about the occurrence of disaster in the library?
- iii. Do the libraries make adequate preparation for disaster?
- iv. Do the libraries make adequate preparation for disaster management?
- v. What are the challenges facing disaster management in the library?

### Methodology

The universities sampled for this study are University of Dar es Salaam Library and Kampala International University Constituent College Library in Dar es Salaam. The population of the study consisted of all the 83 workers in the two libraries, because the responsibility for effective disaster management is collective. All the workers in the libraries were sampled because the population size is small. Five research questions were answered in this study and a questionnaire titled "Disaster Preparedness and Management Questionnaire" (DPMQ) containing 52 items was designed and administered to all the 83 members of staff. The structured questionnaire used to collect data for the study was divided into six sections. Section A elicited background information about respondent, such as name of library, gender, work experience, and so on. Section B elicited information on the respondents' perception about the possibility of disaster in the library. Section C sought information on disaster occurrence in the library, while Section D generated information on disaster preparedness of the library. Sections E and F sought information on disaster avoidance and management respectively. Fifty-one copies out of 83 copies administered were returned, thus giving a response rate of 61.4 percent. The data collected were analysed using percentages.

### Findings and Discussion

The data collected were analysed in accordance with the research questions raised for the purpose of addressing the objectives of the study.

**Research question 1:** To what extent is library staff aware that disaster can happen in the library?

**Table 1: Respondents' Opinion about Disaster Awareness**

Items Assessed for Disaster Awareness	Number	Per cent
Possibility of disaster	45	88.2
Disaster is a problem	48	94.1
No awareness campaign	36	70.6
There is no training on awareness	33	64.7
Awareness creation through print	42	82.4
Websites can be used to create awareness	39	76.5
Simulations and drills are mediums for awareness creation	39	76.5



Table 1 indicates the views of respondents about disaster awareness. The finding showed that 45 respondents that is, 88.2% were of the view that library is prone to disaster; while a high majority that is 48 or 94.1% respondents indicated that disaster was a problem in their libraries. A total of 36 respondents that is, 70.6 % reported that there was no awareness campaign in the library, while 33 respondents that is, 64.7% reported that there was no training on disaster awareness. The majority of respondents, 39 or 76.5% were of the view that websites as well as simulations and drills are mediums that can be used to create awareness. The finding of the study on staff awareness revealed that, there is the need to create awareness on disaster in the library using all available mediums, such as handbills, posters, bulletins, radio, and television among others.

**Research question 2:** What are the library staff's opinions about the occurrence of disaster in the library?

**Table 2: Respondents' Opinions about Occurrence of Disaster in the Library**

Items Assessed for Disaster Occurrence	Number	Per cent
Disaster has occurred in this library	30	58.8
Experienced disaster in the library	21	41.2
Disaster could be caused by negligence	45	88.2
Disaster could be caused by natural factors	42	82.4

Table 2 provides the respondents' opinions about occurrence of disaster in the library. Most of the respondents, that is, 30 or 58.8% stated that disaster had occurred in their libraries, while 21 or 41.2 % respondents agreed that they had experienced disaster in the library. Also, a total of 45 or 88.2% respondents indicated that disaster is caused by negligence, while 42 respondents that is 82.4% were of the opinion that natural factors can cause disaster in the library.

**Research question 3:** Do the libraries make adequate preparation for disaster?

**Table 3: Respondents' Opinions about Measures Available to Prepare for Disaster in the Library**

Items on Measures put in Place to Prepare for Disaster	Number	Percent
Library is planned in a way that disaster can be avoided	12	23.5
Staff are trained to avoid disaster	9	17.6
Disaster avoidance training is not available to all staff	51	100
Disaster avoidance policy is not available	51	100
Disaster plan is not updated regularly	51	100
Print media on disaster avoidance are not distributed	48	94.1

Posters on avoidance are not pasted at strategic locations	39	76.5
There is no disaster plan in my library	36	70.6
Disaster plan is not often reviewed	42	82.4
There are no staff that respond to disaster	45	88.2
Disaster kit is not available in the library	33	64.7
Written disaster policy is not available in the library	48	94.1
Disaster control equipment is not available	30	58.8
Staff are not trained on disaster management	48	94.1

Table 3 shows that the library was not planned in a way to avoid disaster. This is confirmed by the respondents of 12 or 23.5%. As regards training of staff on disaster avoidance, only 9 or 17.6% respondents indicated that staff members were trained, while the remaining 82.4% or 42 respondents had contrary opinion. On the issue of availability of disaster avoidance training to all members of staff, availability of disaster avoidance policy and regular update of disaster plan, all the 51 or 100% respondents indicated that all these were not available in their libraries.

Table 3 equally shows that the library does not have disaster plan with 36 or 70.6% respondents affirming this. This affirms Hlabaangani and Mnjama's (2008) finding that the majority of the information centres in Gaborone, Botswana had no disaster preparedness plans despite the fact that they were aware of the possibility of being prone to disaster. In consonance with this finding is that of Lengfellner (2011), who reported that advance planning and preparedness are the keys to preventing or at least reducing the impact of potential hazards in the libraries. This finding corroborates the finding of Ahenkorah-Marfo and Borteye (2010), who reported that the academic library under study had no disaster control plan.

Information about training of staff on disaster management was also sought. A total of 45 or 88.2% respondents attested to the fact that provision was not made about staffs that are to respond to disaster whenever it occurs. Analysis showed that a total of 33 or 64.7% respondents indicated that disaster kits were not available in their libraries, while 18 respondents that is, 35.3% confirmed that disaster kits were available. Above all, 48 or 94.1% respondents were of the view that staffs were not trained on disaster management. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Lindtveit (2011a) who declared that education and training are crucial for any personnel responsible for safety and first aid. The training will enable the employees to assess suitability of the measures put in place for disaster management. On the issue of staff training on management of disaster, all the respondents that is, 51 or 100%, agreed that there was no training of staff on disaster management. However, 42 respondents that is, 82.4% attested to the availability of fire extinguishers in their libraries, while other equipment that can be used to respond to disaster in the library were not available such as smoke detectors, fire alarms, among others.

This finding is in agreement with Hlabaangani and Mnjama (2008) who reported that libraries were not adequately prepared for disaster because they do not take necessary precaution and diligence that disaster control deserves to prevent the destruction of lives and loss of collections. Also in consonance with this finding is that of Lindtveit (2011b) who is of the view that to improve preparedness, a library must first evaluate the procedures it

has in place. The implication of this is that libraries should have disaster management committee constituted in order to prevent disasters as well as lessening the severity of the effects of disaster when it eventually strikes.

**Research question 4:** Do the libraries make adequate preparation for disaster management?

**Table 4: Respondents' Opinions about Disaster Management in the Library**

Items assessed for disaster management	Number	Per cent
Disaster has occurred in my library	24	47.1
Disaster plan was not successful	48	94.1
Disaster plan was not reviewed after the incidence	45	88.2
Committee to maintain disaster plan is not available	42	82.4
Disaster kit is not maintained	33	64.7
There is adequate budget for disaster kits' replacement	42	82.4
Valuable materials are not stored off-site	45	88.2
Smoke detectors are not available	48	94.1
Fire alarms are not installed	45	88.2
There are fire extinguishers	42	82.4
Emergency exits are available	39	76.5

Table 4 shows the respondents' opinion about disaster management in the library. On the occurrence of disaster in the library, a total of 24 or 47.1% respondents had experienced disaster in the library, while on the successful implementation of disaster plan, 48 respondents that is, 94.1% disagreed that this was not successful and that the disaster plan was not reviewed after the incidence, with 45 or 88.2% respondents confirming this. Information about the availability of disaster committee to maintain disaster plan was confirmed by 42 or 82.4% respondents who said that this was not on ground. Also, there was no off-site storage of valuable materials in the library with 45 or 88.2% respondents affirming this, while, 48 or 94.1% respondents revealed that smoke detectors were not available in the library. Also, fire alarms were not installed, with 45 or 88.2% respondents confirming this. However, 42 or 82.4% respondents indicated the availability of fire extinguishers in the library, while 39 or 76.5% respondents said emergency exits were available.

**Research question 5:** What are the challenges facing disaster management in the library?  
**Table 5: Respondents' Opinions about the Challenges Facing Disaster Management in the library**

Challenges Facing Disaster Management	Number	Per cent
No training of staff on management of disaster	24	47.1
Disaster management is not budgeted for in the library	2	3.9
Lack of funds	6	11.8
Lack of funds to purchase disaster equipment	6	11.8
Management does not take the issue of disaster management in the library seriously	2	3.9
Lack of awareness	12	23.5
Lack of written disaster policy	4	7.8

Table 5 provides answers based on the responses. Respondents were asked to state the obstacles facing disaster management. The respondents suggested that lack of training of staff on disaster management is the major problem, with 24 or 47.1% respondents affirming this. Awareness equally topped the list of the major obstacle with 12 or 23.5% of the respondents mentioning this. Also, lack of written disaster policy is one of the challenges, a total of 4 or 7.8% of the responses were in the affirmative. Equally mentioned as problem is that disaster management was not budgeted for by the library. This finding corroborates that of Echezona et al, (2010) who reported that inadequate facilities, inadequate fund allocation to libraries and lack of interest on the part of some librarians are some of the obstacles facing disaster management in Nigeria.

### Conclusion

This study has established that even though members of staff are aware of possible disaster in the library, adequate preparation and management of disaster are problems facing disaster management in academic libraries in Tanzania. Libraries must be prepared for disasters, both natural and manmade that can occur in their institutions in order to reduce damages of the collections to the barest minimum. Disasters are better managed when there is a management team who are able to coordinate all activities that are aimed at preventing, fighting and managing disasters. Academic libraries must find ways to keep their patrons, personnel and collections safe. These can be achieved if physical and human resources through co-operative efforts are adequately utilised through planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

- There is a need for greater investment in disaster management in libraries in order to prevent disasters, minimise the loss if it eventually strikes, and thus disaster control. Funds, facilities and trained personnel should be made available. Adequate funds should be provided to train staff, buy disaster kits, cultivate maintenance culture of the resources in the library, and create awareness, among others. Disasters can be well

managed and even be prevented if members of staff are trained and equipped adequately with the basics of what to do before disaster strikes, as an adage says "a stitch in time saves nine"; during and after disasters might have struck. A well-prepared staff can prove to be the Libraries' greatest asset in preventing disaster.

- Disaster management should be an integral part of library management in general and as such it should be incorporated into all library activities and be a task of every member of the staff. Every organisation needs to have a disaster management team in order to be able to manage the outbreak of disasters successfully.
- Awareness should be created among members of staff. This can be in different forms such as awareness talks, briefing sessions, hands-on practice, simulation exercises and video presentations.
- Disaster management in the library involves prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Libraries should be well prepared for disaster so that it never happens. A successful disaster management in the library can only be achieved by using physical and human resources available in the library through co-operative efforts, to adequately plan, organise, staff, direct and control disaster in academic libraries.

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