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Analyzing the Resilience of Libraries in the Face of Adversity: Evidence from Northeastern Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigates the resilience of libraries in Northeastern Nigeria amid challenges such as armed conflict, socio-political instability, economic hardship, and environmental hazards. The methodology involves qualitative and quantitative data collection through semi-structured interviews, surveys, observations, and document analysis. Case studies of selected libraries provide a deeper understanding of specific adaptive strategies. Data analysis employs both descriptive and inferential statistics, utilizing tools like frequency distributions, percentages, and chi-square tests to examine relationships between variables and library resilience. The research aims to identify key challenges, assess adaptive strategies, and propose sustainable solutions to enhance the resilience of libraries, thereby supporting their crucial role in community development and education despite persistent adversities.*

Keywords: Resilience, Libraries, Adversity, Northeast, Nigeria.

Introduction

Libraries stand as pillars of knowledge, offering sanctuary and resources pivotal for community growth and education. However, in Northeastern Nigeria, these institutions face a crucible of challenges that strain their functionality and endurance. In a landscape marked by armed conflict, socio-political turmoil, economic instability, and environmental hazards, libraries encounter formidable obstacles to their role as centers of learning and community support. Amidst these adversities, understanding the resilience of libraries becomes imperative: a theme relatively explored within disaster recovery contexts, yet less extensively scrutinized within the specific dynamics of Northeastern Nigeria's challenges.

Resilience embodies the capacity to anticipate, absorb, recuperate from, or adeptly adjust to both real and potential adverse circumstances, as described by the National Academies, Policy and Global Affairs, Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy in 2012. It signifies the positive manner in which individuals confront adversity and challenging situations in their lives, demonstrating effective adaptation to stressors, oppressive systems, and various life challenges, as indicated by Rajabifard et al. in 2021.

Community resilience, particularly in the context of climate change and associated natural or humaninduced risks and disasters, involves fortifying and adapting communities when faced

with disruptions. This entails integrating adaptability into urban systems, lessening inherent risks, and bolstering the ability to respond to external uncertainties linked to sudden and ongoing shocks and disturbances, thereby reducing community exposure to these disruptions, as articulated by Lindemann et al. in 2022.

Upon reviewing literature on this topic, alternative terms such as "disaster resilience" by Paton & Johnston in 2017 and the broader term "community disaster resilience" by Ostadtaghizadeh et al. in 2015 emerged. However, this article opts to employ the term "community resilience," as it is the most prevalent term found in Library and Information Science (LIS) literature, as evidenced by studies conducted by Garmer in 2018, Grace & Sen in 2013, and Veil & Bishop in 2014.

While existing literature acknowledges libraries' involvement in disaster response efforts, it primarily highlights broader disaster contexts and their role in sustainable development initiatives. Publications by various scholars, including Roberts et al. (2021), Yang & Ju (2021), and Gomez et al. (2023), delve into the efforts of libraries in disaster scenarios, underlining their contribution to community resilience within the broader spectrum of sustainable development goals. Additionally, scholars like Vårheim have highlighted the pivotal role libraries play in disaster recovery, while Kosciejew emphasizes their integral part in sustainable community development.

However, a focused exploration into the resilience of libraries in Northeastern Nigeria amid the region's distinct adversities remains relatively unexplored. This study seeks to bridge this gap by undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by libraries in this specific context, evaluating their adaptive strategies, and proposing actionable recommendations to bolster their resilience. By scrutinizing the nuanced interplay between libraries, adversity, and community resilience in Northeastern Nigeria, this research aims to provide insights crucial for safeguarding these vital educational and community assets in the face of multifaceted challenges.

Libraries play a pivotal role in facilitating access to information, education, and cultural resources, serving as crucial hubs for community development. However, in Northeastern Nigeria, the region has been grappling with a myriad of challenges, including but not limited to, armed conflicts, insurgency, economic instability, and environmental hazards. These adversities pose significant threats to the functioning and sustainability of libraries in the area.

Available literature primarily discusses the engagement of libraries during calamities. Researchers like Roberts et al. (2021), Yang & Ju (2021), Gomez et al. (2023), among others, have contributed to this field. These publications highlight the involvement of libraries in disaster response and recovery.

Libraries are recognized as active participants in disaster recovery efforts (Vårheim, 2016). Additionally, they are viewed within the context of the interrelationship between community

resilience and various global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, energy, and food security. Furthermore, studies emphasize the role of public libraries in fostering sustainable development.

The contribution of libraries to the development of community resilience is regarded as an integral aspect of sustainable community progress (Kosciejew, 2020).

The ongoing socio-political unrest and security concerns have not only disrupted the normalcy of daily life but have also created a hostile environment for educational institutions, including libraries. The adverse conditions have led to a decline in infrastructure, resource availability, and the overall capacity of libraries to effectively serve their communities. Additionally, the displacement of populations and the destruction of educational facilities further exacerbate the challenges faced by libraries in the region.

The economic instability and resource constraints in Northeastern Nigeria pose significant hurdles for libraries in maintaining and updating their collections, adopting modern technologies, and providing essential services to users. Furthermore, the environmental vulnerabilities, such as droughts and floods, add an extra layer of complexity, affecting the physical infrastructure and the preservation of valuable materials within library premises.

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the resilience of libraries in Northeastern Nigeria in the face of adversity. It seeks to identify the key challenges faced by libraries in the region, assess their adaptive strategies, and recommend sustainable solutions to enhance their resilience. By understanding the specific impediments and developing targeted interventions, this research endeavors to contribute to the preservation and revitalization of libraries as vital community assets in Northeastern Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

The discourse surrounding the resilience of libraries amid adversity, particularly in conflict-ridden and challenged regions like Northeastern Nigeria, has garnered attention in recent scholarly publications. Previous works have primarily focused on the role of libraries during disasters and their broader engagement in community resilience, sustainable development, and addressing environmental concerns. Roberts et al. (2021), Yang & Ju (2021), and Gomez et al. (2023) have contributed significantly by discussing the efforts of libraries in disaster scenarios. These works offer insights into how libraries have responded during crises, highlighting their adaptive strategies, resource mobilization, and community engagement. However, while these studies acknowledge the role of libraries during disasters, there remains a gap in understanding their resilience in sustained adversities prevalent in regions like Northeastern Nigeria.

Vårheim (2016) has emphasized the involvement of libraries as active participants in disaster recovery efforts. This perspective sheds light on the immediate responses of libraries to crises but doesn't delve into the long-term challenges faced by libraries in conflict

zones and regions plagued by socio-political instability, which are persistent realities in Northeastern Nigeria.

Moreover, discussions around the relationship between community resilience and broader socio-environmental challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and food and energy security, have been touched upon within the context of libraries. However, this literature doesn't specifically address the unique challenges libraries in Northeastern Nigeria face due to the intersection of conflict and environmental vulnerabilities.

Kosciejew's work (2020) contextualizes the role of libraries in community resilience within the framework of sustainable community development. While this underscores the importance of libraries in fostering community resilience, it's essential to explore the application of such principles in the specific context of Northeastern Nigeria, considering the region's distinct challenges.

The existing literature provides valuable insights into the multifaceted roles of libraries in adversity and resilience. However, there is a need for focused research that examines the specific challenges encountered by libraries in Northeastern Nigeria, integrating the complexities arising from conflict, socio-political instability, environmental vulnerabilities, and resource constraints. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the unique resilience strategies adopted by libraries in this region, aiming to provide actionable recommendations for sustaining and enhancing their pivotal role in community development despite formidable adversities.

Community Resilience

The core of community resilience lies in societies' ability to adapt to potentially disruptive changes (Hopkins, 2010; Innes & Booher, 2010; Maguire & Cartwright, 2008). According to Norris et al. (2008), this involves four main "adaptive capacities": economic development, social capital, information and communication, and community competence. Innes and Booher (2010) highlight the unpredictability of the future, advocating for a collaborative approach to develop adaptive strategies that guide us in a desired direction. Hopkins (2010) similarly promotes a process-oriented perspective through the Transition Movement, suggesting that both adaptive and transformational resilience enable communities to reconsider assumptions and create new systems in response to change.

Adaptive Capacities and Libraries

While there is extensive research on community librarianship, the literature specifically addressing community resilience and libraries is sparse. However, some studies focus on libraries' adaptive capacities, particularly in relation to social capital and public libraries. Bundy (2003) highlights the significant role of public libraries in community building and social capital, identifying a major challenge for them to position their work as essential in

these areas. Bourke (2005) underscores this by noting that enhancing serendipitous interactions is crucial for public libraries to establish credibility within their communities.

Cox (2000) reports that libraries contribute to community equality, which in turn boosts social capital, and recommends that libraries actively advocate for and define this role within the community, emphasizing trust-building as a fundamental function. Conversely, Johnson's (2010) survey indicates that while a direct causal link between library use and social capital cannot be proven, there is a notable relationship. Varheim (2009) further supports this by showing a positive correlation between social capital and public libraries at a macro level, though it remains challenging to pinpoint exact impacts at the local level.

A study by the Urban Libraries Council (Manjarrez, Cigna, & Bajaj, 2007) advocates for the public library's role in promoting economic development, drawing four key conclusions:

- Early literacy services lay the foundation for long-term economic success.

- Library employment and career services equip workers with new technologies.

- Resources and programs for small businesses reduce barriers to market entry.

- Public library buildings serve as catalysts for physical development.

Conceptual Framework

This literature review is anchored in Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) resilience theory, applied to library, school, and school library contexts. Their theory provides a framework for positive psychology, promoting positive attitudes toward subjective experiences, individual traits, and life events through psychological interventions. The Center for the Future of Libraries (ALA, 2019) identifies resilience as an emerging trend and a new framework for understanding librarians' commitment to diversity, education, engagement, equitable access, preservation, public service, and social responsibility (Aldrich, 2018). Resilience is defined as "a capacity that enables people, places, and systems to survive, adapt, and thrive." Aldrich discusses the response of local libraries to natural disasters and civil unrest, emphasizing the crucial role of librarians as activists. In times of political, economic, technological, environmental, or social disruption, librarians bring community members together to find solutions to common problems.

Methodology

Study Area

The North East (often hyphenated to the North-East) is the one of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria representing both a geographic and political region of the country's northeast. It comprises six states – Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe.

Geographically, the North East is the largest geopolitical zone in the nation, covering nearly one-third of Nigeria's total area. In terms of the environment, the zone is primarily divided between the semidesert Sahelian savanna and the tropical West Sudanian savanna ecoregions.

The region has a population of about 26 million people, around 12% of the total population of the country. Maiduguri and Bauchi are the most populous cities in the North East as well as the fifteenth and seventeenth most populous cities in Nigeria.

The North Eastern State Library Service began in Maiduguri in 1968 with 5,765 Books on display and others were locked up in boxes due to lack of space. Both the State Library collection and the Native Authority Reading Room collection of Arabic manuscripts was housed in one small room. Pearce (1968). While the new states were busy trying to lay a solid foundation with a view to consolidating there position in there various States, further political development in terms of state creation took place in the Country in 1976, 1990 and 1992. Within a period of 10 years, the North Eastern State was fragmented into 6 independent states (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe) each deriving its power from the Centre and each pursuing its unique plan towards public library development.

Data collection and data analysis

Data Collection

- Qualitative research methods involving semi-structured interviews with library staff, community members, and stakeholders. Interviews with librarians, government officials, educators, and community members to gather insights into the challenges faced and strategies employed.

- Surveys to gather quantitative data on the usage patterns and challenges faced by libraries during adversity. Surveys distributed among library users to understand their perspectives on the importance of library services during adversity.

- Observations and document analysis to supplement the data collected through interviews and surveys.

- Case studies of select libraries in the region to understand specific strategies adopted for resilience.

Data Analysis

The data will be analyze using relevant descriptive and inferential statistics to test the hypotheses. Dummy type of data will be analyze using percentage, frequency and chi-square test to see the existing relationship between categorical or dummy variables and Library resilience. The data will be computed and analyze using relevant and appropriate theory with the aid of STATA (14) package.

The type of analysis to be employed in a research depends on the nature and purpose of the study (Chukwuone, 2009). Similarly, selection of techniques to be adopted depends on some factors, particularly the objectives of the study, availability of data and time constraint (McNally & Othman, 2002).

Different methods are being used in analyzing data. One of simple but important analytical tool used in data analysis is the descriptive statistical tools. These include frequency distributions, percentages, mean, pie charts, bar charts, histograms and standard deviation. However, study that requires an allinclusive analysis of quantitative relationship needs a higher level of analysis other than descriptive statistical tools. This study therefore, besides descriptive statistical tools, will employ relevant inferential statistical tools to test the hypotheses.

Summary of Findings

The research results are presented by addressing each research question sequentially, beginning with general libraries, then moving to the school environment, and finally focusing on school library settings.

Role of Libraries in Times of Trauma

Libraries serve as more than just access points for books and information. They offer shelter, clean drinking water, and internet access, becoming crucial community support systems during crises, such as natural disasters or insurgencies. Public libraries are seen as 'second responders' (Fallows, 2019) due to their essential role during various crises.

Impact of Trauma on Learning

Extensive research highlights the detrimental effects of trauma and crises on student learning (Harms, Shannon-Bowen, Hanson, & Pollak, 2018; Schwabe, Joels, Roozendaal, Wolf, & Oitzl, 2012). Trauma from ongoing negative circumstances or acute events disrupts children's learning and behavior. Evidence shows students experiencing significant reductions in traumatic symptoms even a year after insurgent activities. Libraries and library professionals are well-positioned to support community stakeholders by providing necessary resources.

Libraries' Role in Developing Resilient Learners

Libraries can lead in helping communities deal with the emotional aftermath of tragedies and contribute to developing resilient students. Analysis indicates that librarians already offer considerable empathy and support to their library patrons.

Discussions

This study has shown that, although there are anecdotal accounts from popular media, there is a lack of comprehensive empirical research on the resilience of libraries in

Northeastern Nigeria in response to traumatic events from the perspective of community and school libraries. A review of the available literature uncovered only one empirical study describing the aftermath of a traumatic incident and its long-term effects on a library, and one empirical study on the role of rural school and public librarians in providing empathetic services to teens.

The researchers found little data on the events that occur in a library and its program following a disaster, whether man-made or natural. How does this impact the pre-existing library program? How does it affect the librarian's role in providing instruction? How does the librarian adapt the collection, programming, and instruction to meet post-disaster needs? These and many other questions remain unanswered due to the limited data collected on the role of school librarians and library programs in response to trauma and tragedy.

Recommendation

Based on the study's findings, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

- ✓ Enhance the collection of current materials, including journals, magazines, government gazettes, and student work, to ensure up-to-date resources are readily available.
- ✓ Provide specialized resources for individuals with mobility impairments, such as adaptive keyboards, closed-circuit televisions, and other assistive technologies tailored to their needs.
- ✓ Offer comprehensive resources for students with hearing impairments, such as sign language videos, induction loops, audio devices, and amplified telephones, to enhance their access to information.
- ✓ Implement additional supporting facilities like handrails, ramps, and special toilet facilities within the library premises to improve accessibility.

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