

Chapter 20

The Contribution of Multi-Methods to the Understanding of Disaster Management Practices of Community Libraries

Sabelo Chizwina

Sol Plaatje University, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This chapter reflects on the lessons learnt from applying multi-methods in a study to determine community librarians' disaster management beliefs and practices in a rural context. A case study design that used a questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis was employed. The study sought to generate new knowledge about disaster management practices of community libraries in the North West Province of South Africa. The researcher collected quantitative data as the primary data collection strategy, and qualitative data supplemented it. The rationale for triangulating the two types of data was that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods were sufficient to capture the perceptions and identify practices amongst the participants. The triangulation of data facilitated the understanding of the subjective meanings, developing a description of disaster management practices and localising participants' statements within social patterns of interaction.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on the research methodology that the researcher applied. A methodology is central to the research process. It provides the lens that guides the author to acquiring knowledge about a social phenomenon and finding answers to the research questions (Ngulube, 2015a). A methodology is concerned with how “knowledge is understood, described, explained, verified, judged, evaluated, tested, explored, investigated and interpreted” (Ngulube, 2015, p.132). In this chapter, quantitative data

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is the primary data collection strategy, and qualitative data supplement it. The chapter aims to share the lessons learnt from the contribution of multi-methods to the understanding of disaster management practices of community libraries in the North West Province (NWP) of South Africa. In addition, the chapter aims to demonstrate the application of multi-methods in a disaster management study based on the lesson learnt using community libraries in the North West Province.

BACKGROUND

The study focused on community libraries in the North West Province of South Africa. Community libraries in the province fall under the Department of Culture, Arts and Traditional Affairs (CATA), through the Directorate Library, Information and Archive Services. In total, at the time of the study, there were 110 community libraries in the NWP. Most of the libraries are a result of the Community Libraries Services Conditional Grant Programme. The Community Libraries Services Conditional Grant was introduced by the Government of South Africa to address the funding problem created by the constitutional assignment of libraries to provinces, despite libraries historically being funded from municipal budgets (Stilwell, 2011).

The intention behind the grant was to enable provinces to increase allocations to the library service, given its importance. Until then, provinces were not prioritising sufficient resources for the library function from their funds (Stilwell, 2011). As part of the conditional grants, the Directorate Library, Information and Archive Services purchases books for municipalities, build new libraries, pays for seconded staff provides information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and access to the Internet.

The Rationale of the Study

Community libraries in South Africa are of great importance, as they support government goals, such as increasing employment, reducing skills shortages, improving economic growth and eradicating poverty (Mnkeni-Saurombe, 2010). Skarzynski and Nassimbeni (2016a) report that public/community libraries in South Africa are the only source of leisure reading for most of the population.

In NWP, risks prevail at all libraries. Consequently, they require disaster plans to protect employees, patrons, resources and facilities. In addition, because they are the target of service delivery protests in the province and South Africa, in general, community libraries are compelled to prepare for disasters, mitigate disasters and have a recovery plan to restore operations in the event of a disaster.

The observation that disaster management is not prioritised and given attention by some community libraries in NWP motivated this study. In addition, many librarians misconstrue disaster management to relate to an event that could not occur in their context, and, thus, there was no need to plan for it. Unfortunately, however, several disasters have occurred in NWP.

Studies that examined disaster management practices of a province, a country or different countries in a region followed quantitative approaches. For example, Garnett et al. (2018) surveyed Australia's current preparedness, and knowledge levels utilised a quantitative approach. Researchers distributed a questionnaire to public libraries. In Nigeria, Owolabi et al. (2014) examined Nigerian polytechnic libraries' disaster awareness and preparedness and used a survey research design. Parul (2015) examined digital data protection of libraries in India to investigate the perceptions of librarians about the probability of digital disasters happening in their libraries and assess the level of digital disaster preparedness among

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