



Elements and Dimensions of Emergencies Preparedness and Response among Large Worship Centres in South-South Region of Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Good emergency response plans help ensure that appropriate actions are taken to minimize the effects of any loss. Considering the recent emergency events involving worship places in Nigeria, the study examined the emergency response preparedness measures in large worship centres in the South-South State capitals of Nigeria. With focus on worship centres with seating capacity above 1500, the study selected worship centres such as Full Life Christian Centre (Uyo), Living Faith Church (Port Harcourt), Salvation Ministry (Yenagoa) and Christ Embassy Summit (Benin) for

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the study. The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design based on questionnaire for data collection and analysis was done through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.21) using the descriptive (frequency count and table) and inferential statistics (analysis of variance-ANOVA). The result of the analysis indicated that worship centres agreed to have appointed personnel for risk monitoring and emergency team (92.9%) and established a proper and functioning communication protocol with the relevant government sector (86.1%). However, the worship centres have not developed initial response monitoring framework to facilitate timely preparation and monitoring in case of crisis (67.2%) and lack a written contingency plan, response and emergency preparedness document that is publicly available (58.0%). The statistical analysis of the study indicated that worship centres showed significant difference in protocols between the Church and the Government for requesting/accepting international assistance (where $p < 0.05$, $p = 0.014$). overall, the worship centres showed significant level of emergency preparedness and response; however, there is need for integrated approach towards infrastructural development planning towards optimizing their emergency capabilities.

Keywords: Emergency response; preparedness; worship centres; emergency practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Being prepared in the event of a disaster not only can reduce a loss, but can make the difference between life and death. Emergency preparedness involves activities to prevent a disaster from occurring and if it cannot be prevented then the impact can be mitigated through adequate planning [1]. Creating a plan requires an in-depth knowledge of your environment, combined with a risk assessment that identifies the risks to which the organization may be subject. The complexity of the plan will be directly proportional to the size of the organization and facilities. Many researchers have recommended the practice of disaster management among organizations including religious institutions, business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local governments [2,3].

On 12 September 2014, a five-storey building on the premises of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) that was used to house mostly foreign guests collapsed. About 116 persons were confirmed dead in the disaster, 85 of whom were South African citizens, 22 were Nigerians, two were Togolese and two were Beninoise [4]. On 10 December 2016, the Reigners Bible Church building, which can hold 5000 congregants, collapsed during the consecration of the General Overseer of the Church, Apostle Dr Akan Weeks (Dr Weeks) as a bishop. At least, 50 people were reported dead in the disaster [5]. However, some reported the numbers as high as 160 [6]. Aside the collapse of building, on 5th June, 2022 a Catholic Church located in Owo, Ondo State witnessed a mass shooting and bomb attack on the congregations leading to the

death of at least 40 people and numerous injuries.

As already observed, there are more reported cases of Christian church building collapses than mosques within the Nigerian and African context. This observation raises a question of whether there are scriptural, denominational or belief bases for ensuring building construction standards? However, this is not the focus of the present study. The central question of this study is “are churches prepared for possible emergencies that can affect their congregation? There are many large church auditoria in the country – some situated in the South-South region. There is the Full Life Christian Centre (Noah’s Ark Auditorium) Uyo, Akwa Ibom State with a capacity of 10,000. The International Gospel Center operated by the Word of Life Bible Church located in Warri, Delta State with a capacity of 35,000 and Doctor Jesus City - Head Quarter church to Omega Power Ministry, Mbodo – Aluu, Port Harcourt, with a capacity for 70,000 congregants are congregations within the same region. We also have the “Hand of God Cathedral” Currently contesting for the title of the world’s largest church auditorium with a seating capacity of 120,000 in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Kyne et al. [7] investigated the state of objective and subjective preparedness and any discrepancy between the two types of disaster preparedness using an online survey instrument. There was a small percent of the total respondents who are actual prepared for disasters. Individual emergency preparedness is critical to mitigate and minimize the negative impacts from disasters. According to Javed, et al., [8] Faith-based organizations (FBOs) play a

key role in disaster response all over the world and their involvement has been rising in the recent past. Yemi-Jonathan and Obafemi [9] assessed the emergency response preparedness measures among large worship centres within the Port Harcourt metropolis. The outcome indicated that churches could manage emergency events within their system, but this might not be the same in the case of large-scale events such as act of terrorism and the collapse of buildings. Yemi-Jonathan et al. [9] assessed the attitude, behaviour, and knowledge of religious organizations (congregations) on emergency preparedness. It was noted that individual emergency preparedness can be improved through changing attitudes and knowledge, which can be developed through continuous dissemination of information and engaging congregants in disaster drills and exercise to improve their experience. Baidhaw [10] explored Muhammadiyah theological stand on disaster; its role and strategies in disaster management and mitigation. Van Coller and Akinloye [5] examined the roles of religious organisations and state governments in reducing the risks of avoidable disasters in religious buildings and concluded that although a religious organisation may not be able to stop all such disasters, having an effective disaster risk policy can assist in reducing the occurrence of avoidable mishaps in religious buildings.

Several studies have been conducted with regards to emergency preparedness and response for various organisation and societies [1,11-13] and specifically for faith-based organization [14,8,15, 5,3,5]. However, emergency preparedness activities comprise many components and include a complex cycle of planning, equipment, training, exercises and improvement with emergency preparedness exercises often considered the most vital part of the cycle [16]; therefore, the study intended to assess the elements and dimensions of emergencies preparedness and response among large worship centres in south-south region of Nigeria.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1 Study Area

The South-South Region of Nigeria is located on 4°21' 43.2''N, 7° 40' 52.8'' N and longitude 5° 8' 42''E, 9°30'7.2'' E (Fig. 1) protruding towards the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic coast of West Africa (Shittu, 2014). The region is a densely populated area in Nigeria. Its population is about

31 million people. The land mass extends over about 70,000 km², and make up 7.5 percent of Nigeria's landmass. The region consists of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo and Rivers states. The region lies within the Wet equatorial climate; high cloud cover and fewer sunshine hours cause damp weather conditions throughout most parts of the year.

2.2 Study Design and Sample Size

The survey research method was adopted to carry out the study. Survey research is a specific type of field study that involves the collection of data from a sample of elements drawn from a well-defined population through the use of a questionnaire (Visser, Krosnick & Lavrakas, 2002). This method was adopted because it is a suitable and efficient way of studying large population. The population of the study comprised of all churches and their worshipers within the selected states of study which include Rivers, Edo, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom State; however, for the purpose of the study based on the eligibility criteria, the population of the study was presented in Table 1.

To get a true representative sample of the target population, the Taro Yamane (1964) formula for sample size determination was used;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

Where: e= Level of precision (0.05)

N= Population
n= Sample size
1= Constant

$$n = \frac{18400}{1 + 18400(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{18400}{1 + 18400 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{18400}{1 + 46}$$

$$n = \frac{18400}{47}$$

$$n = 391$$

For the study robustness and conveniences, the sample size was adjusted by 9. Therefore, the study total sample size was 400 respondents (Church Officials, Workers/Congregants).

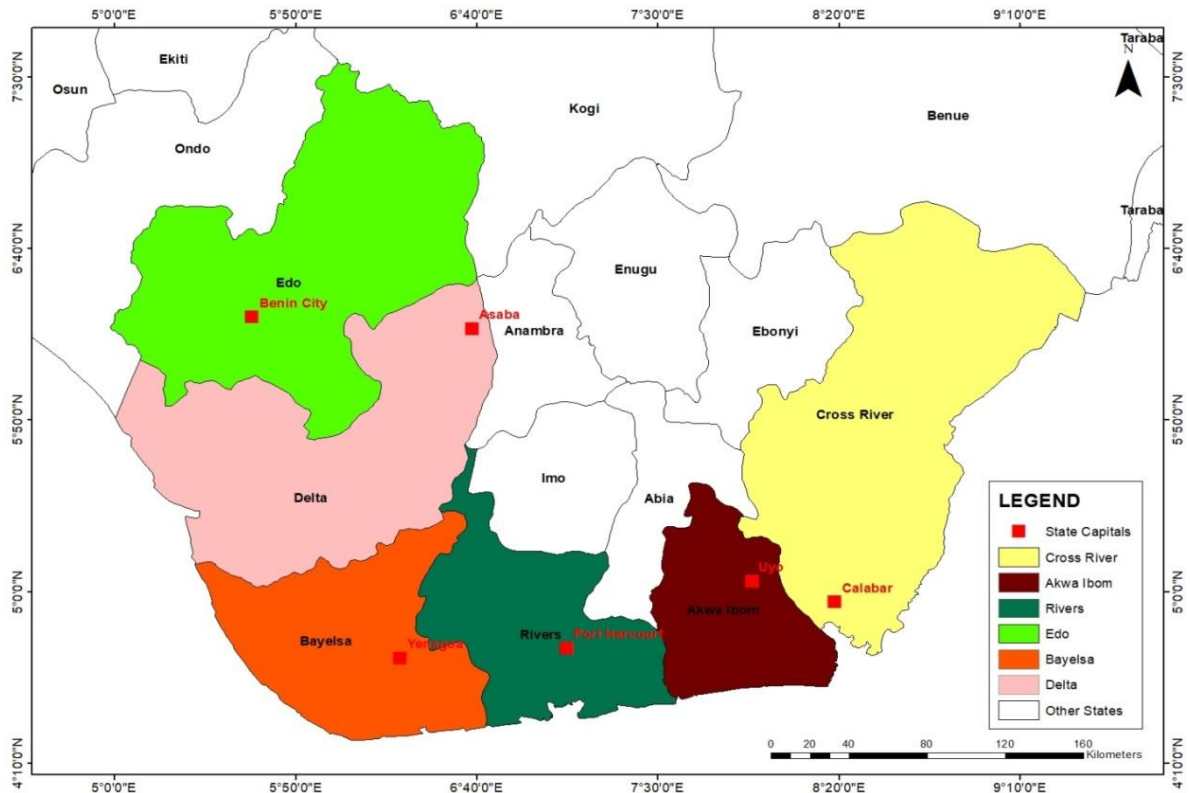


Fig. 1. Overview of the study area

Table 1. Population and administration of the questionnaire among the churches of study

States	Church Locations	Church Name	Seating Capacity	Percentage Admin.	Returned Questionnaire
Akwa Ibom	Uyo	Full Life Christian Centre	10000	54.3	217
Rivers	Port Harcourt	Living Faith Church	4300	23.4	93
Bayelsa	Yenagoa	Salvation Ministry	2100	11.4	46
Edo	Benin	Christ Embassy	2000	10.9	44
Total			18400	400	381 (95%)

A total of 400 copies of questionnaire was randomly administered using simple random sampling technique in respondents' selection; however, 375 of the questionnaires were properly filled and subjected to further analysis.

2.2 Data Analysis

The retrieved copies of questionnaire were coded and subjected to statistical analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-21) for proper analysis. The data of the study were analysed through descriptive statistics tool such as frequency counts and percentages of response were adopted for the

analysis. The use of such statistics allows the researcher to present the evidence of the study in a way that can be understandable and makes conclusion concerning the variables of study.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 2 of the study presented the demographic details of the respondents. The analysis indicated that 51.2% (195) of the respondents are male, 38.1% (145) between the age of 30-40years, 45.4% (173) of the respondents are

single with formal education at least of primary level (34.9%-132) and 34.6% (132) engaged in professional occupation. From the analysis, most

respondents 32.5% (124) have been worshipping at their centres between 2 to 4years and 33.3% (127) were ushers for their worship centers.

Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	FLCC		LFC		SM		CEB – Z1		Total (%)
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Sex of Respondents									
Male	101	48.3	43	52.4	28	60.9	23	52.3	195(51.2)
Female	108	51.7	39	47.6	18	39.1	21	47.7	186(48.8)
									381(100)
Age (years)									
18-29	52	24.9	20	24.4	14	30.4	24	54.5	110(28.8)
30-40	85	40.7	34	41.5	17	37.0	9	20.5	145(38.1)
41-50	50	23.9	23	28.0	13	28.3	6	13.6	92(24.2)
51-60	15	7.2	4	4.9	2	4.3	5	11.4	26(6.8)
61 and above	7	3.3	1	1.2	-	-	-	-	8(2.1)
									381(100)
Marital Status									
Single	89	42.6	38	46.3	18	39.1	28	63.6	173(45.4)
Married	86	41.2	30	36.6	19	41.3	15	34.1	150(39.4)
Divorced	17	8.1	5	6.1	4	8.7	-	-	26(6.8)
Widowed	17	8.1	9	11.0	5	10.9	1	2.3	32(8.4)
									381(100)
Educational Qualification									
No Formal Education	41	19.6	22	26.8	6	13.0	-	-	69(18.1)
Primary	77	36.8	28	34.1	21	45.7	7	15.9	133(34.9)
Secondary	70	33.5	22	26.8	16	34.8	5	11.4	113(29.7)
Tertiary	21	10.0	10	12.2	3	6.5	32	72.7	66(17.3)
									381(100)
Primary Occupation									
Unemployed	49	23.4	15	18.3	16	34.8	6	13.6	86(22.8)
Professional	71	34.0	32	39.0	19	41.3	10	22.7	132(34.6)
Skilled/Managerial	51	24.4	20	24.4	7	15.2	4	9.1	82(21.5)
Manual/Partly Skilled	24	11.5	12	14.6	-	*	9	20.5	45(11.8)
Self-employed/Trading	10	4.8	1	1.2	3	6.5	12	27.3	26(6.8)
Student	3	1.4	2	2.4	1	2.2	3	6.8	9(2.3)
Others	1	.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1(0.2)
									381(100)
Worshipping Years									
< 1year	42	20.1	11	13.4	8	17.4	13	29.5	74(19.4)
2-4years	63	30.1	26	31.7	18	39.1	17	38.6	124(32.5)
5-7years	53	25.4	12	14.6	7	15.2	8	18.2	80(21.0)
9-12years	33	15.8	22	26.8	4	8.7	3	6.8	62(16.3)
13years and more	18	8.6	11	13.4	9	19.6	3	6.8	41(10.8)
									381(100)
Official Position Held/Unit									
Pastor	7	3.3	5	6.1	3	6.5	1	2.3	16(4.2)
Minister	22	10.5	7	8.5	4	8.7	7	15.9	40(10.5)
Usher	77	36.8	30	36.6	9	19.6	11	25.0	127(33.3)
Protocol	60	28.7	18	22.0	12	26.1	10	22.7	100(26.3)
Welfare/Health	43	20.6	22	26.8	18	39.1	8	18.2	91(23.9)
Security	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	9.1	4(1.1)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	6.8	3(0.7)
									381(100)

3.2 Elements and Dimensions of Emergencies Preparedness and Response

Table 3 presented the overall elements and dimension of emergencies preparedness response for the churches under study. The findings showed that 7.1% (27) respondents disagreed that church have appointed personnel for risk monitoring and emergency team while 92.9% (354) of the respondents that church have appointed personnel for risk monitoring and emergency team respectively. 13.9% (53) respondents disagreed that worship centres have established a proper and functioning communication protocol with the relevant government sector while 86.1% (328) of the respondents agreed. The study showed that 23.4% (89) of the respondents disagreed that worship centres have clear procedures/protocols in place between the Church and the Government for requesting/accepting international assistance while 76.6% (292) of the respondents agreed that worship centres have ensured that clear procedures/protocols were in place between the Church and the Government for requesting/accepting international assistance. 10.8% (41) of the respondents disagreed that worship centres have established a proper and functioning communication system with local NGOs and civil society to ensure the timely flow of information before and during an emergency while 89.2% (340) of the respondents agreed. 22.8% (87) of the respondents disagreed that worship centres have establish and convene an inter-agency contingency response planning task force, with government and NGO participation while 77.2% (294) of the respondents agreed. From the analysis, 6.8% (26) of the respondents disagreed that worship centres ensure that specific plans for collecting, managing, analysing and sharing information has been included in plans for needs assessment, operational response and monitoring while 93.2% (355) of them agreed. Concerning the development of initial response monitoring framework to facilitate timely preparation and monitoring in case of crisis, 67.2% (256) of the respondents disagreed while 32.8% (125) agreed. Among the respondents, 22.3% (85) disagreed that worship centres have contact with private sector partners

and identify possible areas of support while 77.7% (296) of the respondents agreed that worship centres have contact with private sector partners and identify possible areas of support. Amongst the respondents, 17.9% (68) disagreed that there is continuous review of security plans to ensure that they are up-to-date and relevant for the area of planned operation among worship centres; while 82.1% (313) of the respondents agreed that there is continuous review of security plans to see that they are up-to-date and relevant for the area of planned operation among worship centres. 58.0% of the respondents disagreed that worship centres have well written contingency plan, response and emergency preparedness document and publicly available while 42.0% (160) of the respondents agreed to the availability of such document. 57.5% (219) of the respondents disagreed that worship centres have an emergency response plan that has been adequately communicated to all congregants 42.5% (1622) of the respondents agreed to the availability of such response plan.

Using the ANOVA, the difference in the element and dimensions of emergencies preparedness and response among the worship centres were tested based on the stated hypothesis:

H_0 There was no statistically significant difference in the elements and dimensions of emergencies preparedness and response among the worship centres.

H_1 There was a statistically significant difference in the elements and dimensions of emergencies preparedness and response among the worship centres.

From Table 4, the Sig.-value was used to determine the levels of significant (where $P\text{-Value} < \alpha$ (0.05) reject null hypotheses; $p\text{-Value} > \alpha$ (0.05) accept the null hypothesis) were adopted. From the outcome, all the Sig-value indicated that $p\text{-Value} > \alpha$ (0.05); hence, the null hypothesis (H_0) which stated that there was no statistically significant difference in the elements and dimensions of emergencies preparedness and response among the worship centres, was accepted for all the variables.

Table 3. Elements and dimensions of emergencies preparedness and response (overall)

S/N	Elements and Dimensions of Emergencies Preparedness and Response	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Total (%)	Mean	SD
1	Church has appointed personnel for risk monitoring and emergency team	-	27 (7.1)	237 (62.2)	117 (30.7)	381 (100)	3.24	0.57
2	Established a proper and functioning communication protocol with the relevant government sector		53 (13.9)	168 (44.1)	160 (42.0)	381 (100)	3.28	0.69
3	Ensure that clear procedures/protocols are in place between the Church and the Government for requesting/accepting international assistance	22 (5.8)	67 (17.6)	180 (47.2)	112 (29.4)	381 (100)	3.00	0.84
4	Establish a proper and functioning communication system with local NGOs and civil society to ensure the timely flow of information before and during an emergency	22 (5.8)	19 (5.0)	207 (54.3)	133 (34.9)	381 (100)	3.18	0.77
5	Establish and convene an inter-agency contingency response planning task force, with government and NGO participations.	53 (13.9)	34 (8.9)	164 (43.1)	130 (34.1)	381 (100)	2.97	0.99
6	Ensure that specific plans for collecting, managing, analysing and sharing information has been included in plans for needs assessment, operational response and monitoring	15 (3.9)	11 (2.9)	263 (69.1)	92 (24.1)	381 (100)	3.22	0.48
7	Develop initial Response Monitoring Framework to facilitate timely preparation and monitoring in case of crisis	230 (60.4)	26 (6.8)	32 (8.4)	93 (24.4)	381 (100)	2.14	0.51
8	Contact with private sector partners and identify possible areas of support	-	85 (22.3)	218 (57.2)	78 (20.5)	381 (100)	3.13	0.84
9	Continuous review of security plans to see that they are up-to-date and relevant for the area of planned operation	22 (5.8)	46 (12.1)	172 (45.1)	141 (37.0)	381 (100)	3.11	0.75
10	Church have well written contingency plan, response and emergency preparedness document and publicly available.	132 (34.6)	89 (23.4)	160 (42.0)	-	381 (100)	2.98	0.76
11	The Church emergency response plan has been adequately communicated to all congregants	106 (27.8)	113 (29.7)	162 (42.5)	-	381 (100)	3.11	0.51

NB: SA-Strongly Agreed, A- Agreed, D- Disagreed, SD- Strongly Disagreed and SD-Standard Deviation Research Hypothesis

Table 4. ANOVA table for elements and dimensions of emergencies preparedness and response

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Church has appointed personnel for risk monitoring and emergency team	Between Groups	1.135	3	.378	1.173	0.320
	Within Groups	121.606	377	.323		
	Total	122.740	380			
Established a proper and functioning communication protocol with the relevant government sector	Between Groups	2.671	3	.890	1.862	0.136
	Within Groups	180.279	377	.478		
	Total	182.950	380			
Ensure that clear procedures/protocols are in place between the Church and the Government for requesting/accepting international assistance	Between Groups	7.428	3	2.476	3.596	.014*
	Within Groups	259.569	377	.689		
	Total	266.997	380			
Establish a proper and functioning communication system with local NGOs and civil society to ensure the timely flow of information before and during an emergency	Between Groups	4.746	3	1.582	2.682	0.047*
	Within Groups	222.393	377	.590		
	Total	227.139	380			
Establish and convene an inter-agency contingency response planning task force, with government and NGO participations.	Between Groups	10.312	3	3.437	3.546	0.015*
	Within Groups	365.425	377	.969		
	Total	375.738	380			
Ensure that specific plans for collecting, managing, analysing and sharing information has been included in plans for needs assessment, operational response and monitoring	Between Groups	.267	3	.089	.381	0.767
	Within Groups	84.806	362	.234		
	Total	85.074	365			
Develop initial Response Monitoring Framework to facilitate timely preparation and monitoring in case of crisis	Between Groups	.268	3	.089	.337	0.799
	Within Groups	100.021	377	.265		
	Total	100.289	380			
Contact with private sector partners and identify possible areas of support	Between Groups	2.627	3	.876	2.060	0.105
	Within Groups	160.245	377	.425		
	Total	162.871	380			
Continuous review of security plans to see that they are up-to-date and relevant for the area of planned operation	Between Groups	.630	3	.210	.296	0.828
	Within Groups	267.543	377	.710		
	Total	268.173	380			
Church have well written contingency plan, response and emergency preparedness document and publicly available.	Between Groups	2.474	3	.825	1.455	0.226
	Within Groups	213.673	377	.567		
	Total	216.147	380			
The church's emergency response plan has been adequately communicated to all congregants.	Between Groups	.896	3	.299	.517	0.671
	Within Groups	217.975	377	.578		
	Total	218.871	380			

*Significant

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Elements and Dimensions of Emergencies Preparedness and Response

The elements and dimensions of emergencies preparedness response revealed that worship centres agreed to have appointed personnel for risk monitoring and emergency team, established a proper and functioning communication protocol with the relevant government sector, and ensure that clear procedures/protocols are in place between the Church and the Government for requesting/accepting international assistance. They have established a proper and functioning communication system with local NGOs and civil society to ensure the timely flow of information before and during emergencies. They also have established and convene an inter-agency contingency response planning task force, with government and NGO participation and ensured specific plans for collecting, managing, analysing and sharing information – all of which had been included in plans for needs assessment, operational response and monitoring.

Also, the finding indicated that congregants agreed that worship centres have developed initial response monitoring framework to facilitate timely preparation and monitoring in case of crisis, established contact with private sector partners and identify possible areas of support and there is continuous review of security plans to see that they are up-to-date and relevant for the area of planned operation among worship centres. However, the congregants disagreed with elements and dimension of emergencies preparedness response such as written contingency plan, response and emergency preparedness document and publicly available and emergency response plan that is adequately communicated to all congregants at the worship centres.

Overall, the worship centres showed great level of preparedness towards various emergencies and this according to Lamidi and Benson [17], being prepared in the event of an emergency can reduce a loss and make the difference between life and death. Yemi-Jonathan and Obafemi [9] noted that worship centres could manage emergency events within their system, but this might not be the same in the case of large-scale events such as act of terrorism and the collapse of buildings. Smith [15] opined that a prepared church could assemble volunteers quickly to help

local emergency managers in their response and recovery operations. The statistical analysis of the study indicated that worship centres have similar elements and dimension of emergencies preparedness response among them.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Good emergency response plans help ensure appropriate actions are taken and minimize the effects of any loss while such plan requires an in-depth knowledge of your environment, combined with a risk assessment that identifies the risks to which the organization may be subject. The study considered various elements and dimension of emergency preparedness and response of large worship centres and therefore concluded that worship centres showed great level of preparedness and response towards various emergencies within their capacity; however, this might not be enough in case of large-scale events such as act of terrorism and the collapse of buildings. The study recommended the need for integrated approach towards infrastructural development planning and review of on-going and planned infrastructural projects with a view to optimizing their emergency capabilities while still meeting their intended purposes.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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