

THE ROLE OF SOKOTO STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (SEMA) IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FIRE DISASTER IN SOKOTO CENTRAL MARKET, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Fire disasters have become a recurring threat to commercial activities in Nigeria, particularly in major urban markets where congestion, poor electrical installations, and inadequate fire safety measures increase vulnerability. This study examined the role of the Sokoto State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) in the fight against fire disasters in Sokoto Central Market, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the nature and causes of fire disasters, the magnitude and socio-economic consequences of fire incidents, the roles of SEMA in disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, as well as the level of collaboration between SEMA and other stakeholders in the fight against the scourge of fire disasters in Sokoto Central Market. The study adopted a qualitative case study design. Primary data were collected through In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and field observations involving 26 purposively selected participants. Respondents included SEMA officials, officials of the Sokoto State Government, personnel of the State Fire Service and Sokoto Central Market management, as well as academics and victims of fire disasters. Secondary data were obtained from government reports, academic literature, policy documents, and disaster management publications. Data were analysed using thematic content analysis. The findings revealed that electrical faults, illegal electricity and solar installations, market congestion, indiscriminate waste disposal, blocked access routes, and negligence by traders are the major causes of recurrent fire outbreaks in Sokoto Central Market. The study further established that SEMA plays a significant coordinating role through rapid emergency response, inter-agency collaboration, disaster assessment, relief distribution, public sensitization, and post-disaster rehabilitation in the management of fire disaster in Sokoto Central Market. However, the agency's effectiveness is constrained by inadequate funding, obsolete firefighting equipment, poor documentation of disaster losses, weak enforcement of fire safety regulations, political interference, communication gaps, and encroachment on emergency access routes. The study concludes that although SEMA has made appreciable contributions to fire disaster management in Sokoto Central Market, strengthening institutional capacity, improving stakeholder coordination, enforcing fire safety regulations, and investing in modern emergency response infrastructure are essential for reducing fire risks and enhancing market resilience.

Keywords: Fire disaster, management, Sokoto State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Emergency response, Sokoto Central Market,