

SERVICE DELIVERY PROTESTS RESULTING IN THE BURNING OF LIBRARIES: A STUDY OF SELECTED PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

South Africa is taking significant steps to improve access to information to all communities in the nine provinces. Since 1994, great strides have been made to build new public, school libraries and to upgrade historically less equipped library facilities throughout the country. People visit libraries to search for employment, government information, writing assignments, research, and study space and to seek many other information resources. The absence of libraries acts as an effective barrier to development, reconstruction and economic development. It is also becoming increasingly clear that access to information and communications technology is the key factor in bridging the gap between the developed and developing countries, hence the efforts to provide free Wi-Fi to public libraries in South Africa. In addition, the provision of free internet access to communities has also been enhanced through partnership with some foreign funding. Even though the South African government is building more libraries in rural communities, during service delivery protests some of these libraries have been deliberately set alight. University libraries are now being targeted as well. Protestors complain about the government's not satisfying communities' mixed basic needs. Maslow's premise is that if people's needs are not satisfied that may create tensions that can influence people's attitudes and behaviours. He further indicated that it is only an unsatisfied need that can trigger violent behaviour resulting in libraries being burned as collaterals. Librarians are challenged to remain active partners to steer public discourse around government's provision of libraries, the negative impact of burning libraries and more. This paper, therefore, investigates the nature of mixed triggers leading to protests and identifies those relating to the burning of libraries, and look into ways librarians can protect libraries by getting involved in community issues.

Keywords: South Africa, Service Delivery Protests; Burning Libraries; Triggered Displaced Aggression.

1. INTRODUCTION

Libraries are a very valuable social resource, giving job seekers, entrepreneurs, students and learners access to information, the internet and photocopy facilities, in addition to serving the reading needs of the public (South Africa Department of Arts & Culture, 2013). However, from 2005 South Africa started witnessing protests from many corners of the country whereby communities complained about the government's failure to address their basic needs. Basic needs are enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Communities expected better life when the ANC took over as a new government in 1994. During elections politicians and the government officials make promises of addressing people's needs, but after elections communities complain that the government officials have forgotten promises they made to communities. Failure of the government to give people what they want has led to communities destroying anything that is associated with the government. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996 provides for the need for community participation in planning for service delivery. Grassroots tools have been created to enhance developmental local government, such as the imbizos, indabas, masethethisane, masakhane and door to door campaigns, the development of a leadership cadre prepared to listen and serve its citizenry, such as Presidential Hotline, the establishment of government customer care centres and Thusong... (Shaidi, 2013:40). However, it does not identify clear measurements of its successes and failures in development planning at the grassroots problem. Williams (2006) as cited in Madzivandila & Maloka (2014:655) adds that scheduled meetings have been marred by lack of the requisite facilitation or coordination infrastructure and skills to optimise

community participation, lack of public transport to and from the venue of the meeting; and a lack of logistical capacity and human resource. The political scientist, Tapscott (2009) cited in Hart & Nassimbeni (2014:4), lays the blame with local government:

"Despite the best intentions of legislators and policymakers, however, it is evident that the majority of municipalities have thus far failed to give effect to the principles of Batho Pele [putting the people first] and participatory democracy. Indeed, public frustration with what is perceived to be meaningless exercises in participation through ward committees, public meetings ... and the like is steadily growing."

Bitso (2015) points out that the tragedy of this problem is that these incidents often happen in historically disadvantaged, impoverished communities that need resources (information included) to emancipate them from poverty and other social perils. Ndlozi (2015) points out that during fees must fall, students took to the streets of all major cities without any permission and hit the heart of city centres where, many township protests normally cannot arrive. These protestors usually close roads, burn tyres; loot shops, and in extreme cases burn libraries. These protests are often violent. But Karamoko (2011) rejects labelling a protest violent as this fails to distinguish between those protests that were initially violent, from those that became violent. Pillay (2016) cites Lizettee Lancaster, manager of the crime and justice hub at the Institute for Security Studies when she said "In most cases, people have a high expectation of response and often people that mobilise feel that there is no other way to address their grievances". She adds that some of the key triggers that determine the escalation or de-escalation of a protest included; failed infrastructure and services, the media's interest in the issues, police action and response, low level

of access to resources, trust and distrust of official authorities, highly motivated individuals and official's response to the violence, among others. The aim of this paper is to attempt to get a deeper understanding of triggers behind the burning of libraries.

In achieving the objectives of the paper authors intends to describe the nature of triggers behind the protests which led specifically to the burning of several libraries, examine the triggers articulated by those who support the burning of libraries, highlight the cost effects associated with the burning of libraries and to consider ways in which librarians could play a constructive role for protesting communities to value libraries rather than destroy them. Burning libraries is not a new phenomenon but South Africa has been experiencing the burning of libraries as far back as 2005 due to non-service delivery protests. It is not possible to trace all libraries which were destroyed during the service protests as some do not make the headlines. The paper does not cover libraries destroyed during wars. Firstly, the focus is on those South African libraries which were burned partially or to the ground from 2005 to 2016.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are protestors who have burned libraries after government's failure to address communities' needs. Then the failure triggered them to be violent and destroy government structures even though they directly were not related to their grievance. Before addressing the Triggered Displaced Aggression as a theory for this paper, it is important to briefly begin with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (HON) as a guide to human needs as it is used in many environments. HON consists of five areas of human needs:

The stages in the HON are not mutually exclusive and may overlap based upon which needs dominate and

TABLE 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (HON).

Needs	Examples
Physiological and Biological needs	food, water, shelter (housing), excretion, etc.
Safety/Security needs	security of body, of employment, of resources, of morality of the family, of health, of property
Love and belongingness needs	friendship, intimacy, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.
Esteem needs	achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, and respect from others.
Self-Actualization needs	morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts.

Source: Authors

motivate the individual at any one-time dependent upon individual psychological and physical circumstances (King-Hill, 2015). An earlier paper on service delivery protests by Louw (2007) as cited in Nell (2013:1) points to the important underlying psychological fact that when basic human needs are not met (security, respect, freedom and personal power) frustration builds up. At that time the victims of poor service delivery identify with the methods of the aggressor and thus respond with violence as the only means to achieve their goal. In the process of looking at means and ways to address these basic human needs, their anger may be displaced, meaning it gets directed towards something or someone else that/who has nothing to do with the original conflict. This is the idea of a triggered displaced aggression.

3. TRIGGERED DISPLACED AGGRESSION (TDA)

A more relevant theory for this paper is the TDA which occurs when people have anger towards someone that they cannot confront directly, and then later a mild trigger of annoyance, or irritation, causes them to explode with anger due to the pent up frustration that they could not express earlier, emitted by the eventual target of aggression (not the original provocateur), (b) it is by itself a provocation, and (c) it has differential effects depending on its intensity (Pederson, Gonzales & Miller, 2000:914). Meloy (2000) as cited in Vandreal (2011:39) indicates that triggers tend to be acute experiences or circumstances that aggravate an individual or group toward a violent act. South Africans have seen how protestors who feel provoked end up directing their anger at the government infrastructure such as libraries. A provocation can be an action or speech that makes someone angry or sometimes even violent. Evidence shows provocative triggers as complex and has several interrelated elements but in some cases they show some similarities. Other trigger elements serve to convert 'private troubles' into more visible 'public concerns' at a more popular level (Von Holdt, Langa, Molapo, Mogapi, Ngubeni, Dlamini & Kirsten 2013).

Although there are valid reasons why communities protest for no service delivery, Nleya (2011) argues that the link between service delivery and protests has perhaps been overstated. Reasons are that the exact configuration of grievances varies from protest to protest and community to community, invariably, issues linked to deficits in service delivery –housing, water, sanitation and electricity –have

featured prominently. And many protests appear to shift from one issue to another. An example of water service delivery issues has been (and still are) a part of a range of conflated grievances that masquerade under the general rubric of 'service delivery' issues and underpin many rallying calls for social protest action. Although such conflation reflects the inter-relatedness of social services, it also masks the precise nature of the specific water service delivery issues in question (Tapela, Ntwana & Sibanda, 2015).

Bandieri & Higson-Smith (2011) group the causes of protests into three and each group covers as many sub-causes.

3.1 Root Causes

Root causes are described as long standing factors that may have been latent for a long period but are critical to address systemic violence. Examples of root causes are high levels of unemployment, poverty and are closely related to the physiological and safety needs as in HON. South Africa has both an unemployment problem and a working poverty problem. When examining basic needs Karamoko (2011) show that housing topped the list. But those with houses ask "What is a house when people are unemployed and without food?" Many black South Africans are unemployed and living below poverty line and expecting the government to satisfy create employment opportunities. Leshoro (2016) indicates that South Africa's rate of unemployment went up above market expectations to 26.7% of the labour force in the first quarter of 2016, from 24.5% in the fourth quarter of last year. In its quarterly labour force survey, Statistics South Africa indicates that this means over 5.7 million people were without jobs in the first quarter compared with 5.2 million previously. The expanded definition of unemployment, which includes people who have stopped looking for work, went up to 36.3% in the first three months of the year, compared to 33.8% in the last quarter of 2015.

3.2 Proximate Causes

The proximate causes are described as causes which are closer to what is causing protests. Vandreal (2011:39) describes them as events which are closest to, or immediately responsible for causing some observed results. These exist in contrast to higher-level root causes which are usually thought of as the 'real' reasons when something happens. Proximate causes are:

3.2.1 Poor Local Governance Includes

Corruption, lack of communication with communities, competition for access to resources, indifference to the needs of the community, patronage networks, politics of excess, use of outsiders in official positions, gender as an issue in local governance, internal conflict, lack of accountability, poor treatment of community members by officials, use of sex in exchange of opportunities, nepotism, inadequate leadership, conflict between officials and civic leaders.

3.2.2 Other Causes Relate to Problems with Service Delivery (Housing, Electricity, Education, Health, Water, Sanitation, Lack of Recreational Spaces)

Political friction in the community (between different parties and within the ANC), failure of previous peaceful protest actions, high levels of crime, lack of judicial institutions such as a police station, high number of foreign nationals, civic organisation take over, low education levels, high levels of substance abuse in community, contested border, high density of population, workers protest action close to the community. Under proximate level an example is one on a contested border between the Venda and Tsonga tribes in the Vuwani region which stemmed from ethnic conflict shocked the country (Praag.org, 2016). Officially however, ethnicity does not exist in South Africa, despite the country having eleven official languages. During the days of white rule, care was taken to apportion to each tribe its own territory and institutions, in an effort to minimise so-called "black-on-black violence". However, the advent of Afro-Marxist rule in 1994, has led to the phenomenon of "dominant tribes" prevalent in the northern region of South Africa, the Venda tribe which used to have its own "Republic of Venda" under the apartheid system, is asserting its power over the Tsonga people. Three districts previously under Tsonga control have been incorporated into the Venda-ruled territory, leading to the current rioting and burning of schools, post offices and government buildings (Praag.org, 2016). It further comments that the incorporation of another area is a normal tactic, as whitest Afrikaner towns in the country have also been merged with other municipalities to disenfranchise them completely at the local level. However, Afrikaners do not burn their own schools as a form of protest.

3.2.3 Accelerators

Accelerators are factors which make the protests to increase the speed of a reaction. Vandreal (2011:39) defines them as destabilising factors that increase the potential for individuals to resort to violence.

These stems from police use of aggression against the protestors and being confused, weak and incompetent, inactive, use of outside units, use of torture, unable to access area. Other causes are related to political entrepreneurs, economic entrepreneurs, youth involvement, collective violence occurs nearby.

One shocking case of police brutality was the violence that turned a small-town protest into a fiery national spectacle where Andries Tatane, a teacher in a small town of Ficksburg in the Free State was killed on 13 April 2011. It started as a peaceful march and when Tatane tried to talk to the police he was shot dead. The death of Tatane placed both the issue of rising anger over a lack of service delivery as well as police brutality in the media spotlight. During the #feesmustfall at universities police were condemned for using violence as student's claims provocation by the police. Sometimes what triggers protestors are frustrations with the indifference and unresponsiveness of authority to the plight of the community. People are very patient, angry and tired of waiting. A protesting member of the Concerned Group (CG) at Voortrekker informal settlement near Johannesburg said: 'That the houses were burnt down was the mistake of the premier. He promised to come but did not.' Finally, the full-force appearance of police units from outside the local police service on the scene was often a signal for a shift to violent repertoires, usually in response to police violence (Von Holdt *et al.*, 2011:26).

One explanation is that communities are seriously and even desperately frustrated as they feel they are not being listened to. If we pay attention to the thinking of people participating in burning of schools and libraries, one thing becomes immediately clear: these protests are in response to a local democracy, rather than of service delivery. Protests and the burning of schools and other state property are an indication of the deepest levels of frustration in communities and a deep crisis of local democracy (Buccus, 2016). However, the Acting National Police Commissioner, Kgomoitso Phahlane, says the fees must fail protest across the universities have now been infiltrated with certain elements with an agenda to destroy property and commit violence (SABC News, 2016).

3.2.4 What Triggers This Behaviour Towards Libraries?

To best understand the triggers behind the burning of libraries, many documents such as magazines, newspapers and social networks were used. Responses identified here are comments made

by those who justify the burning of libraries. In a case study into collective violence in communities consisting of a mix of small rural towns, large urban settlements originating in informal settlements, partially upgraded with RDP housing, an urban formal township, and a rural informal settlement, all within a radius of 500 km from Johannesburg, the researchers found conflicting and ambivalent views (Von Holdt *et al.*, 2011:9). In Kungcatsha, young men who participated in the protests explained that:

"You go to the library and there is no newspaper, nothing. There's no Internet... That was not a library. What we burnt down was just a room. We burnt a place down so they would build us a proper library... that thing was there when we were born."

At Voortrekker, the community felt that 'we deserve better'. As for the library – 'It was a library by name only. You go inside, there is no content.' A member of the claimed that the library was deficient and the local librarian was hardly ever there as she ran a tavern.

This is a reality that the South African government has to deal with as many libraries which are without the necessary resources. So the community is not getting value for money yet, nor is the government. During a visit to cost eight libraries by the National Department of Arts & Culture they found one library with no books, computer rooms equipped with computer desks and cabling, but no computers. In one, the electricity had been cut off for more than two weeks as the municipality nor had the province paid the bill. No electricity means a borehole cannot pump water, so the librarian had to fetch water with a bucket for the toilet. This is not unique to this librarian now that South Africa is faced with shortage of water.

According to Lor (2013) one reason includes libraries being burned as collateral damage because they are located in municipalities 'buildings which are often targeted during service delivery protests. Jansen (2011), cited in Hart (2012) also states that libraries have always been a target during service delivery protests because most South Africans view libraries as irrelevant collections of books for the educated, the middle class and students. The burning down indicates the lack of value placed on books and libraries. Another reason is that public libraries are often perceived as elitist institutions serving only the most educated living in cities and ignoring the rural people (Davis, 2009). According

to Zaiden (2003), public libraries became viewed from a social perspective as elitist places, book depositories, or somewhere to do schoolwork. These problems prompted the emergence of a conflict of views between the information professional and the wider community. Zaiden furthermore argues that librarians considered for a long time that the main purpose of a library was to preserve its collection, and that made the circulation and dissemination of books difficult. This notion promoted the creation of "useless" [public] libraries (2003).

A recent home opinion section in The Daily Vox website reads as follows "Libraries are the stories of our past and future. But what are they in the face of an abusive present? If libraries are sacred ground, the sustained of that which is good and powerful, then why do they burn so easily? Is knowledge not meant to be a living, breathing thing, created to make the world a better place and not ensconced in ivory towers? When we revere libraries more than we do people, we only create new symbols of oppression"?

When the African National Congress (ANC) and Democratic Alliance (DA) condemned the protesters who set fire to the books few tweets in support of the students read:

- "That library had not even one single black author, maybe there's 2, but the rest was all colonial Dutch-law bull...t that came 1652 #ken". This point was made immediately after the UKZN Howard Law library was burned. Hansen (2016) in an email sent via heligliasa@googlegroup.com said "Some of the student demands all over the country have been the fact that our syllabuses and libraries don't reflect South Africa's history and culture. An example is that the UCT library only has one copy of I Write What I like by Steve Biko, one of South Africa's most well-known philosophers. The writings of the student activists have reflected a wide variety of philosophers from European, Africa and the US. Amongst these philosophers cited are Michel Foucault, Frantz Fanon, Audrey Lorde (herself a librarian) and James Baldwin.
- "When you make books more important than humans, you have a new oppressor."
- "The students were raising their issues in the past weeks and they were ignored. The library burns & now it's a hot topic. #UKZN."

- "The burning of the books is not a reflection on the students, but on a failure of leadership."

On the use of email and Web-based comments Lor (2013:366) questions whether, when the posts provide data for research, persons posting messages on discussion lists and similar media should be considered to be authors or research subjects. Lor cites the suggestions by Association of Internet Researchers (Ess & AoIR, 2002) that this depends on how secure and private the venues are. In the case of "e-mail postings to large listservers" and posts on public Web pages and blogs, the posters "may be understood as authors intending for their work to be public" (2002:7). It would therefore be legitimate to identify the authors of the material considered. However, since the identities of the authors (other than office bearers) are of no consequence in this paper, the authorship posts is not attributed to named individuals (adopted from Lor, 2013).

4. THE COST EFFECT OF DISPLACED AGGRESSION

"These destructive protests are disturbing trends, that communities would channel their anger at libraries which are supposed to be agents of change and transformation," said Ndima (2015), stressing that the onus was on citizens to protect libraries and understand how much money was spent on buildings, technology and print materials. The South African Department of Culture, Arts and Traditional Affairs has received a conditional grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) dating back from 2007. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that has given National Library of South Africa a R32 million grant to pilot the Gates Foundation Global Libraries Project. The extent of libraries destruction explains why the damages to libraries went up to millions of rands.

Van Onselen (2013) compiled a list showing that in 2005 fifteen libraries were burned. Seven of public or community libraries listed were "burnt to the ground"; another four were partially burnt or damaged by fire. The cost of damage in the nine libraries for which estimates were provided, was almost ZAR26 million (c. USD 2.6 million) a mean of R2.9 million (c. USD, 290,000) per library. These costs are an understatement, as in one case the cost of replacing the building was not reported. When public protestors destroyed the Gugulethu Community Centre, in Khutsong in 2005, including a library and computer center, the estimated damage

was R8 million. So, a moderate average of at least R10 million a year. Certainly some R40 million over the past four (Van Onselen, 2013).

More libraries have been burned since Van Onselen's study which covered libraries from 2005-2012. The Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure (DPWRI) conducted an assessment of 31 schools in Malamulele and revealed that R462 828 500 is required to schools assessed (Mandlwana, 2016:3). If the government has to rebuild the schools, this will deprive other communities without proper schools with libraries. Protestors do not take into account the cost to the community of the unavailability of information resources and of safe, quiet spaces for children to study. Many black communities in rural areas need a conducive reading space as in most homes there are no study rooms. School learners faced with demanding projects can no longer flock to public libraries. School libraries are meant to support curriculum, teaching and learning.

5. WHAT ROLE SHOULD LIBRARIANS PLAY?

In many developing countries like South Africa, a high proportion of citizens are likely to be unaware of their rights and responsibilities. Public libraries, alongside Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can help in civic education programmes and provide the necessary information aimed at developing informed communities. Public libraries, through their Internet facilities, can be used to reach out to politically dissatisfied or unmotivated citizens and publicise party positions, solicit feedback, new ideas and new members (Drake, 2001 cited in Arko-Cobbah, 2006:353). They can also provide the information and opportunities for dialogue that the public needs to make decisions about common concerns and ensure accountability from the government (Kranich, 2003 as cited in Arko-Cobbah). The library venue could be used as spaced have discussions on to addressing government issues, aggression, displaced aggression and ensuring that public hearings become productive.

Lanes (2011) as cited in Wilkinson (2011) argues that librarians must be aware and make communities to be politically aware. Political awareness is an important aspect of being an active citizen. There is so much potential for librarians to make a real difference in 'turbulent times'. There is an agreement about the fact that libraries in community building can help ameliorate some of today's social ills, including isolation, a lack of well-being, a lack of

access, and the inability to engage (Scott, 2011:193). Skelton (2011) outlines the role of librarians in providing inspiration, creative spaces, and creating opportunities for healthy and positive dialogues between different populations. They can rebuild the information landscape too, helping society move away from displacing their triggered aggression on libraries. Librarians can actively participate in political deliberations that address the interests and concerns of the communities. Supply communities with materials emanating from the government. As the public library is storehouse of knowledge, it can be viewed as a free society's insurance that all ideas will be accessible to everyone who may want them. Ideas and information are certainly available elsewhere, but no other agency or organization can guarantee such a wide accessibility to ideas of all kinds that will be free of charge to all its customers. Without this kind of accessibility provided somewhere within society, the danger of tyranny increases. The importance of the public library, then, lies in its availability somewhere within society (Mattson, 1998:106).

Maphisa (2015:19) during a librarian's conference on 2015 library theme "Connect @ your library" acknowledges that the theme resonates with the belief that libraries connect people to each other and to knowledge and information. "It is through that connection that I wish to challenge our people and leaders to publicly denounce destruction of these valuable assets and to make sure that there are campaigns to educate communities about the value of libraries. Our people should access not only books but up to date information about services that can improve their lives", he concludes. Lor (2013:371) is critical of the superficial response of South African librarians to the burnings, when he claims that "after brief expressions of dismay, they go back to business as usual" He contends that the profession needs to reflect more on the complex context in which South African libraries are situated and examine their role in townships and shack settlements. His words on the need for *relevance* echo those of the various think-tanks of the transition to democracy in the early 1990s.

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper the limitation is related to a lack of in-depth interpretation and application of the triggered displaced aggression as this is not meant for psychologists but to support an assumption that libraries are targeted because of failure to show aggression towards the source (government).

Librarians should also learn about the mixed nature of these triggers and address them during their meetings with communities. Findings from the literature show that there are a number of triggers which led to the burning of various libraries. One could address the concerns of the public library community with the broader context of a democratic political system. Librarians are challenged to organise talks in the library with the possibility of understanding their concerns as libraries are spaces for information sharing.

Also the effects of burned libraries are massive as when protests end millions or rands are required for repairs of the infrastructure and replacement of technologies, furniture and books. Those who relied on libraries no longer have access to information and knowledge. Even though it is difficult to satisfy all the needs at all times, it is important that communities remain informed as to what is delaying service delivery. It is important to utilise as many stakeholders in the community in terms of dissemination of information. Government should seek to partner with libraries wherever possible as a way to regularly inform communities about issues in a variety of fields, including health, agriculture, civic engagement, education, information literacy and others. Librarians are also challenged to communicate with communities so that they are aware how libraries are meant for all people whether literate or illiterate. In his analysis of South Africa librarians' responses to the recent spate of library burnings that was cited earlier, Lor (2013) warns that the profession needs to confront the social and political factors underlying the incidents, if it is to have any relevance to the vast majority of South Africans.

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