

NIGERIAN JOURNAL

OF LIBRARY, ARCHIVAL AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (NJLAIS).

VOL. 1. NO.12. AUGUST, 2011.

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**SERVICE ORIENTATION AND LIBRARIANS' CHOICE OF LIBRARY
PROFESSION AS A CAREER IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN AKWA
IBOM AND CROSS RIVER STATES OF NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated service orientation and Librarians' choice of library profession as a career in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria. It sought to investigate public service orientation and its relationship with librarians' choice of library profession as a career. The survey design was used for the study. The hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical technique and the relationship was established to be significant at 0.05 level. Though service orientation had a significant relationship with librarians' choice of library profession, the results of data analysis showed a moderately low positive correlation (0.45). The study concluded that service orientation, though a significant determinant of Librarians' choice of career, more than half of the respondents were not influenced in their choice by it. The study recommended that librarians must create awareness and make their impact felt by providing services to their immediate communities thereby encouraging individuals to choose the profession as a career.

INTRODUCTION

The term "librarian" is used often and incorrectly to refer to anyone who works in a library. A Librarian is an information professional trained in Library and Information Science, which is the organization and management of information services or materials for those with information needs. Professional librarians in western nations like the United States, Canada, Australia, etc are professionals with a Master's degree in Library

and Information Science. They are therefore capable of analyzing information, information needs and of providing information services and materials to patrons in a variety of settings with available and appropriate resources.

In a library, there are many positions other than that of librarians. Such positions include library officers, assistants and clerks. Professional positions such as manager, director or administrator are often filled by professional librarians who are versed in the provision of professional services. In these positions, the worker may be given the title administrator, director, manager or librarian.

Librarians as professionals also work in public, academic, special and school libraries, media centres, corporations and government agencies. They are key personnel wherever information materials are catalogued and stored. They also help make access to these reference materials possible. Thus, Librarianship is a profession that crosses the boundaries of time and space (Hopke, 2005).

Library and information services are however expanding in Nigeria. Consequently, professional personnel are required as the basis for effective and efficient library services. Thus qualified librarians are needed to plan, establish and administer all libraries (Nzotta, 1983). Planning for the future supply of this cadre of staff as well as adequate utilization of the present manpower will depend on the services they offer for the public good and the number of people who choose to join the library profession.

Statement of the Problem

Lack of knowledge of the professional duties that make individuals competent participants in the field of librarianship as well as the changing economy of the Nation also accounts for labour unrest, low productivity, unemployment and attendant labour problems. Today's turbulent economy creates numerous challenges for both new library graduates and those seeking to advance or move into positions within the field. Choosing a career in librarianship could be both fierce and challenging when people lose sight of the factors like service orientation that influence such choices.

Objective of the Study

The pervasive lack of visible services offered by Librarians to members of the community seems to result in apathy towards Librarians' choice of Library profession as a career in tertiary institutions. Therefore this study seeks to ascertain the relationship between service orientation and librarians' choice of the library profession.

Research Question

What relationship exists between service orientation and librarians' choice of the library profession?

Hypothesis

Service orientation has no significant relationship with librarians' choice of the library profession.

Significance of the Study

This study will be useful to employers, library educators, practicing librarians and the society at large to understand better the services librarians offer and their usefulness to the society. By so doing, they will better appreciate the profession and encourage interested individuals to make a choice in the library profession.

Literature Review

Service orientation is a major factor that influences librarians' choice of library profession as a career. Service orientation is closely linked with public recognition but both terms are not mutually exclusive. Service orientation implies that a profession provides a service for the public good or the good of society in general (Lawal, 2002). In line with this view, Aguolu and Aguolu stated that libraries are social agencies for progress, cultural enrichment and public enlightenment. The authors also asserted that libraries are subject to the political, cultural, economic and intellectual forces operating in the society in which they exist.

Generally, individuals do not recognize librarians' duties to their immediate communities, as such, they are indecisive about choosing a career in librarianship. Thus, Peretomode (1999) stated that recognition by the public depends on the nature of the service which the profession renders. The author further stated that it must be such that is essential to humanity. The bulk of library professional practice lies in its concern with human knowledge. This is in line with George's (1992) study which found that the most preferred occupations were medicine (21.7%), law (11.88%), engineering (11.75%), accounting (9.83%), and nursing (4.41%). The reasons the respondents gave for their choice included; opportunity to work with people (7.27%), good salary (7.19%), the need to be original and creative (97.15%), quest for a stable and secure future (7.05%). The results of this study clearly indicates that 'opportunity to work with people', which ranked second in the respondents' order of priority was indeed the major preoccupation with careers geared towards serving humanity. This invariably means that some professions have not made their impact felt as regards their social roles and services to the society. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002; 35) identified library's roles in society as knowledge conservation, information, education, research, culture and entertainment. In a similar view, Nwosu (2006) stated that the role of the library in societal progress is therefore easily discernable as it is the store of human knowledge, facilitating access to it to engender progress. The author further stated that lack of appreciation of the role of library profession is the root cause of the poor attitude of the society to the profession. This can invariably impede the choice of librarianship as a career.

Aboyade (1982) subscribed to the above view when she stated that even among the highly educated Nigerians, there is still that lack of appreciation for the difference, which the provision of library and information services can make in their lives and that of the society at large. The author stated further that if such people are ever in a position of policy making, they find it difficult to support the library cause. Owing to this lack of awareness as to the role of libraries as well as librarians in the society, individuals are indecisive about choosing a career in library profession.

All tiers of government in Nigeria are not left out of this prejudice as they unwittingly classify the library as an unproductive sector and hence do not prioritize it (Nwosu, 2006). In other words, the role and expectations of the Nigerian society i.e. the government and people of Nigeria towards the library and the library profession is misconceived. This is basically derived from the fact that the library as a social service is a latecomer in Nigerian public life as evidenced by the fact that the first generation of

librarians are still with us today working hard in their systems (Nnaji, 1986). Thus society's response to choosing a career in library profession generally is weak.

Methodology

The survey research design was used for this study. The study covered eight tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all the 86 professionally trained librarians in the 8 tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, chosen for the study. The tertiary institutions that formed the population of the study were eight in number as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Population as classified by tertiary institutions

Tertiary institutions	Population of librarians	Sample of librarians	Percent (%)
University of Uyo, Uyo	25	25	100
College of Education, Afaha Nsit	6	6	100
College of Agriculture, Obio Akpa	2	2	100
Maritime Academy, Oron	2	2	100
Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua	2	2	100
University of Calabar, Calabar	41	41	100
Cross River State College of Technology	7	7	100
College of Education, Akamkpa	1	1	100
Total	86	86	100

The total population of 86 librarians were used as sample for the study. The use of the entire population was based on the fact that the population is small and accessible. The distribution and sample of librarians in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Cross River states are presented in the table above. The instrument used for data collection for this study was a researcher-developed questionnaire which was referred to as Public recognition and Librarians' Choice of Library Profession Questionnaire (PLCLPQ).

To test the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the questionnaire was given to 20 librarians randomly sampled outside the area of study. The responses obtained were analysed using frequency count and the data obtained were used to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach's alpha reliability test. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha level.

Data Analysis and Result

Hypothesis: Service orientation has no significant relationship with librarians' choice of library profession.

In the above hypothesis, the independent variable is service orientation and the dependent variable is the librarians' choice of library profession. The hypothesis was tested using the PPMC results in Table 9.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) summary of analysis scores on service orientation and librarians' choice of library profession (N = 86)

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	$r_{xy} (Cal)$	Df	$r_{xy} (Crit)$
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$				
Service orientation (X)	737	6375	6257	0.45*	84	.20
Librarians' choice of library profession (Y)	727	6205				

* Significant at $p < .05$ alpha

The results in Table 2 show that the calculated correlation coefficient for the relationship between service orientation and librarians' choice of library profession, $r_{xy(Cal)}$, is 0.45; and that its critical or Table value, $r_{xy(crit)}$, at df, 84 and $P = .05$ alpha, is 0.20. The calculated index, 0.45 is greater than the table value, 0.20. This indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. In other words, service orientation has a significant relationship with the librarians' choice of their profession. Based on this observation, null hypothesis six was rejected. The positive value of the correlation index obtained shows that the majority of the librarians were attracted to the profession because of the services provided by the profession to the reading public.

Discussion of Findings

Regarding service orientation and librarians' choice of library profession, the results in Table 2, showed a moderately low positive correlation between the two variables (index = 0.45). The observation implies that though service orientation is a significant determinant of librarians' choice of their career more than half of the respondents were not influenced in their choice by service orientation. This is explained in terms of the fact that many of the respondents not aware of the services provided by librarians to their immediate communities, hence were indecisive about choosing a career in librarianship.

The finding corroborates Nwosu's (2006) assertion that lack of appreciation for the role of library profession is the root cause of the poor attitude to librarianship as a career; and underscores the need for librarians to create awareness campaigns to enlighten the public on the role of library and information services in their homes and the society, and the prospects in library profession. The study validates George's (1992) study which found that the reasons for youth's most preferred occupations included the opportunity to work with people which ranked second with 7.27%. This means that people were not influenced to choose the library profession for the services rendered by working with and serving people but the need to be original and creative (97.15%).

Major Finding

There exists a moderately low positive correlation between service orientation and librarians' choice of library profession (index = 0.45). This observation indicates that a little less than half of the librarians chose the profession based on service orientation.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, one can conclude that service orientation in the library and information science profession though a significant determinant of

librarians' choice of career, was not an influencing factor for more than half of the respondents the overriding factor in their choice of profession.

Recommendations

The study found that there exists a moderately low positive correlation between service orientation and librarians' choice of library profession. Based on this finding we recommend that:

- 1) All tiers of government in Nigeria should prioritise and support the library cause, so that awareness as to the roles of libraries as well as librarians in the society may be created.
- 2) Since the practice of librarianship lies in its concern with human knowledge, librarians should render more essential services to humanity so as to make individuals decisive about choosing a career in the field.

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