

LIBRARIANS' ABILITY TO ACCESS AND EVALUATE INFORMATION AS CORRELATE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH- SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the correlates of research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria, with specific reference to librarians' ability to access and evaluate information. Using the descriptive correlational research design, a total of 301 respondents in university libraries in South-south Nigeria were studied by adopting the total enumerative sampling technique. From the 251 (83%) valid questionnaire retrieved, it was gathered that a low positive relationship ($r = 0.259$) (26%) exist between librarians' ability to access information and research support services delivery just as a low positive relationship ($r = 0.192$) (19%) exist between librarians' ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south, Nigeria. The study concluded that the ability to access information in different format and the ability to evaluate information are key skills every librarian must possess if they are to make any meaningful impact as information professionals.

Keywords: *Research Support Services, Information Literacy, Library Services University Libraries, Nigeria.*

1. Introduction

University libraries support research activities of their parent institution so as to help them maintain strong research profile, improve their visibility, recognition and overall reputation (Azad & Seyyed, 2007). It is this kind of support that library expert refer to as research support services. Parker (2012) defined research support services as a set of services and facilities which assist in increasing research productivity and scholarship. Raju and Schoombee (2013) added that, research support is the proactive engagement of the librarian with the researcher. However, Hoffman (2016) gave a more comprehensive definition when he defined research support services as anything that a library does that supports the activity of scholarship and research at its parent institution.

Hoffman's definition was however corroborated by Borrego and Anglada (2018) who explained that research support services could be taken to mean library staff interventions in the research lifecycle, including, but not limited to, identifying funding opportunities, searching literature, advising on data management plans, creating researcher identifiers, advising on dissemination and tracking citations. In this study, research support services could be taken to mean all library services which aid a research process from the time of problem identification to the time of publishing and citation tracking.

Research support services often vary from one library to another. For instance, at the University of Pretoria library, some of the research support services given to researchers include advice, support and facilitating

applications for research funding and rating; assistance with proposal, budget preparation and review; partnering with the library services in identification of high impact accredited journals; early career development and capacity building training for recently appointed academics amongst others (UP Library, 2020).

Nevertheless, studies (Katamba & Ibrahim, 2018; Igbinovia, Okuonghae & Adebayo, 2020) explained that information literacy sub-constructs such as ability to access information and ability to evaluate information are crucial skills that could limit the delivery of research support services among librarians in Nigeria. Furthermore, Adeleke and Emeahara (2016) observed that the ability of librarians to access and evaluate diverse kinds of information will go a long way in enhancing their delivery of research support services, especially since research support services entails getting funding information, literature review materials, provision of online and offline resources amongst others. This study is therefore conducted to examine librarians' ability to access and evaluate information as correlate of research support services delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

2. Review of Literature

Access to information in recent times has proven to be a complex task which requires some forms of expertise to undertake. The traditional method of accessing information posed diverse kinds of challenges to information seekers and consumers. This necessitated the reason for the quick adoption of technological innovations which enhances access to information. In fact, such technological innovation gave rise to the development of digital libraries. Consequently, Issa (2014) explained that the complexities of different information sources like the Internet, digital libraries and encyclopedias has reawakened the need for librarians to be skilled in accessing information.

In fact, the explosion of information occasioned by the continuous advancement of Information and Communication Technologies have increased the need for

librarians to be skilled in getting access to only the right information amidst an ocean of information (Okuonghae & Ogiamen, 2020). Access to information gives librarians the right to acquire the specific information to meet a wide range of research needs of library users (Karimi, 2015). However, the ability to access information is the second skill expected to be possessed by an information literate person as identified by ALA (2002). In a study conducted by Udem and Anaehobi (2020), they explained that librarians as information specialist must possess the requisite skills to access information from varying sources and in different format. They must also be skilled in formulating a search strategy to access and retrieve useful information using different search tools.

Furthermore, Adeleke and Emeahara (2016) observed that the ability of librarians to access diverse kinds of information will go a long way in enhancing their delivery of research support services, especially since research support services entails getting funding information, literature review materials, provision of online and offline resources amongst others. This explains why Odede and Zawedde (2018) noted that librarians' access to information for research support services delivery also include searching and retrieval of information in digital format and in print format for the purpose of meeting researchers' information needs. Bolek (2018) observed that librarians ability to access information constitute their ability to identify information source, search for information, find and obtain information from a given source. This further connotes that information cannot be accessed by any individual if such individual has not yet identify the information source and also possess the ability to search through the source.

According to Nadiri and Mayboudi (2010), evaluation of information resources help librarians to understand the different kinds of information sources or materials and recommend the authoritative sources to library users seeking for research information. By evaluating information resources, librarians are able to contribute towards

providing information to aid future development in improving research quality in the different institution of learning. Ukachi and Okeke (2012) stated that it is necessary that librarians possess the ability to evaluate information because today's information are available in different formats. For instance, millions of information are contained in electronic libraries and there is need for librarians to be able to extract the relevant and quality information from the irrelevant information. Through proper evaluation, librarians will be able to direct researchers to the right information and support the research process of the researcher (Ukachi and Okeke, 2012).

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate librarians' ability to access and evaluate information as correlate of research support services delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, this study seek to:

1. Find out the relationship between librarians' ability to access information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria;
2. Ascertain the relationship between librarians' ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in the university libraries in South-south Nigeria;

4. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between librarians' ability to access information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between librarians' ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria?

5. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between librarians' score on ability to access information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria.
2. H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between librarians' score on ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria.

6. Methodology

The descriptive correlational research design was used in this study to examine the correlate of research support services delivery in universities in South-south Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 301 librarians in university libraries in South-south Nigeria. Given the manageable size of the population, the total enumerative sampling technique was adopted so as to study the entire population of the study. The data for this study was collected using a competency test (for the two independent variables) and a checklist (for the dependent variable). The competency test had 10 items each for the independent variable and each of the item had four options A - D and respondents were expect to select only the correct option. This is in line with Ikenwe and Anaehobi (2020). The instrument was validated by experts in Library and Information Science and Measurement and evaluation; while the Cronbach's Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument and it yielded an acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.68 and 0.77 for the two independent variables and 0.77 for the dependent variable. The instrument was thereafter administered directly to the respondents by the researcher with the help of research assistants. Data collected were then analyzed using inferential statistics. All statistical analysis were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Version 25)

7. Presentation of Results

Out of 301 questionnaire administered, a total of 251 valid questionnaire was retrieved, thus, resulting to a response rate of 83%. The result is presented according to the research questions asked and hypotheses statement made.

7.1. Research Question 1

What is the relationship between librarians' ability to access information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria?

The analysis (table 1) shows a low positive relationship of $r = 0.259$ (26%) existing between librarians' ability to access information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south, Nigeria. This implication of this is that librarians' ability to access information positively influence their delivery of research support services. It can therefore be concluded that a low positive relationship exist between librarians' ability to access information and research support services delivery in University Libraries in South-south, Nigeria.

Table 1
Pearson r on Librarians' Ability to Access Information and Research Support Services Delivery

Source of Variation	N	Librarians' Ability to Access Information	Research Support Services Delivery	Remarks
Librarians' ability to access information	251	1	0.259	Low Positive Relationship
Research Support services delivery	251	0.259	1	

7.2. Research Question 2

What is the relationship between librarians' ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria?

The results given in table 2 shows a low positive relationship of $r = 0.192$ (19%) existing

between librarians' ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south, Nigeria. The implication of this is that, the more librarians are able to evaluate information and information sources, the better research support services they will deliver.

Table 2
Pearson r on Librarians' Ability to Evaluate Information and Research Support Services Delivery

Source of Variation	N	Librarians' Ability to Evaluate Information	Research Support Services Delivery	Remarks
Librarians' ability to access information	251	1	0.192	Low Positive Relationship
Research Support services delivery	251	0.192	1	

7.3. Testing of Hypotheses

7.3.1. H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between librarians' score on ability to access information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria.

It is seen from the result (table 3), that the correlation indicated 26% of the variance ($r = 0.259$, $df = 249$, $p = .000$) which is a low positive correlation. Therefore the remaining 74% may be as a result of chance or other

variables not accounted for in this study. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected implying that there is a significant relationship between librarians' score on ability to access information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south, Nigeria. This implies that in increase/decrease in the librarians' ability to access information may lead to a corresponding increase/decrease in their research support services delivery.

Table 3

Significant Correlation between Librarians' Score on Ability to Access Information and Research Support Services Delivery

Source of Variation	N	Librarians' Ability to Access Information	Research Support Services Delivery	df	P Value	Remarks
Librarians' ability to access information	251	1	0.259	249	0.000	Sig.
Research Support services delivery	251	0.259	1			

7.3.2. H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between librarians' score on ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south Nigeria.

The result of the correlation given in table 4, indicated 19% of the variance ($r = .192$, $df = 249$, $p = .002$) which is a low positive correlation. Therefore the remaining 81% may be as a result of chance or other variables not accounted for in

this study. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected implying that there is a significant relationship between librarians' score on ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south, Nigeria. This implies that in increase in the librarians' ability to evaluate information may lead to a corresponding increase in their research support services delivery and vice versa.

Table 4

Significant Correlation between Librarians' Score on Ability to Evaluate Information and Research Support Services Delivery

Source of Variation	N	Librarians' Ability to Evaluate Information	Research Support Services Delivery	df	P Value	Remarks
Librarians' ability to access information	251	1	0.192	249	0.002	Sig.
Research Support services delivery	251	0.192	1			

8. Discussion of Results

The study revealed that a low positive relationship exist between librarians' ability to access information and research support services delivery in University Libraries in South-south, Nigeria. This could be as a result of the fact that, even though access to information is one of the key component of an information literate person, other components such as ability to identify information need, ability retrieve information amongst others, are equally important if one is to be considered an information literate person and ultimately deliver effective research support services. This could be the reason for the low positive relationship. However, the finding from this study is in conformity with Ajidahun (2017) that librarians' ability to access information also influence their delivery of research support services, thus establishing a relationship between both variables. Furthermore, the finding is in tandem with Udem and Anaehobi (2020) that ability to access information is a crucial skill every librarian must possess to be able to deliver effective services.

Also, the study revealed that low positive relationship exist between librarians' ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries, thereby implying that more librarians are able to evaluate information and information sources, the better research support services they will deliver. The revelation from this study is in agreement with Amusa et al. (2018) that librarians' ability to evaluate information is paramount to the delivery of research services as many poorly reviewed and published information materials are now in circulation due to information explosion occasioned by advances in information technology.

Furthermore, the study revealed that a significant relationship exist between librarians' score on ability to access information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south, Nigeria. The implication of this is that an increase/decrease in the score of librarians'

ability to access information may lead to a corresponding increase/decrease in the quality of research support services delivered. This finding support Katamba and Ibrahim (2018) assertions that one of the core professional skills of librarians is their ability to access information in different format and this ability affect how they assist researchers throughout the research lifecycle.

Moreover, the revelation from this study also affirmed that a significant relationship exist between librarians' score on ability to evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-south, Nigeria. This implies that an increase in the score of librarians' ability to evaluate information may lead to a corresponding increase in their research support services delivery and vice versa. This finding is in agreement with Igbिनovia et al. (2020) that ability to evaluate information is crucial to delivering information services especially in this era of information explosion. A drop in librarians' ability to evaluate information will invariably affect the quality of information being delivered.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made:

1. Given the importance of information literacy skills variables such as ability to access and evaluate information, it imperative for librarians to be given practical trainings on information accessibility and evaluation of information so as to enhance improved services delivery.
2. Information literacy training should be introduced into the curriculum of postgraduate researchers as this will help them to be independent learners and researchers.

10. Conclusion

The continuous growth in literature has led to a social problem known today as information explosion. This has further reinforced the need for librarians to be skilled in information access and evaluation, especially since libraries now support research by providing research collections, data literacy training, identifying funding opportunities, searching literature, advising on data management plans, creating researcher identifiers, advising on dissemination, tracking citations and many more. However, despite the importance associated with information literacy skills such as ability to access and evaluate information for the purpose of research support services delivery, observations and preliminary investigations have revealed low research support services delivery in university libraries in Nigeria due to factors such as ability to access and evaluate information. Consequently this study was conducted to investigate the relationship between librarians' ability to access information, evaluate information and research support services delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

The changing landscape of information and information sources has made it imperative for librarians and information professionals to be dynamic and to possess information literacy skills such as the ability to access and evaluate information so as to be effective in the discharge of their services. In fact, today's world is one with excess information in circulation and with it, comes the challenge of sorting the true information from a pool of fake or unfiltered information. The ability to access information in different format and the ability to evaluate information has proven to be key skills every librarian must possess if they are to make any meaningful impact as information professionals. This account for the reason why expert believe that information literacy skills is the mother of all literacies.

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