



ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIBRARIANS' ABILITY TO IDENTIFY INFORMATION NEEDS AND RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined relationship between librarians' ability to identify information needs and research productivity in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. A research questions and hypothesis guided the study. Correlational research design was employed. The population of the study was 121 librarians of 7 federal universities in the South-South states of Nigeria. Total enumeration sampling method was adopted. Kuder–Richardson method was used to establish the internal reliability coefficient, yielding the score 0.56 and Cronbach alpha for questionnaire yielding 0.95. The instrument of the study was both cognitive test and structured questionnaire. Cognitive test solicited information on the ability of librarians to recognize information needs. While structured questionnaire was for research productivity of the librarians. The instruments were analyzed using inferential statistics. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient r was used to answer the research questions. The multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The study revealed that, there is weak positive relationship between librarians' score on the ability to identify information needs and research productivity in the federal universities in the South-South, Nigeria. The findings of this study will novel fact that help to clarify existing uncertainties and ambiguity in the link between some dimensions of information literacy skills and research productivity. Therefore, the study recommends that university management as a matter of concern should organize training and retraining on information literacy skills for librarians so that they can embed the ability to identify their information which would help them publish quality research output.

Keywords: Identification of information needs, Research productivity, Librarians, Federal universities, South-South, Nigeria

Introduction

Information is a valuable and vital resource for research and national development, and the library remains the primary institution responsible for its organization and dissemination. In academic environments, research productivity is a key measure of institutional relevance and academic growth. This productivity depends largely on individual ability to identify relevant, accurate, and timely information tailored to their research needs. However, librarians are academic staff, they are required to be research productivity and also, possess the ability to identify their information needs, understands the nature of their information needs, and matching those needs with appropriate information resources in both print and electronic formats.

The ability to identify information is therefore not just about finding a book on a shelf, but about analytical skills, knowledge of information sources, and use of varied sources of information retrieval



system. Therefore, using fundamental information to classify the search process and taking personal authority for an information search, and managing time efficiently to complete a search are core efforts of information identification skills in initialising an academic research output by academic librarians (Ogunbodede and Oniovosa, 2019). Thus, when librarians possess high-level information identification skills, they are able to reduce the time spend searching, improve the quality of information used, and ultimately enhance their research output.

However, the explosion of information on the web, has necessitated the need for librarians to acquire the ability to identify rightful information resources in varied formats. This paradigm shift has raised questions about the effectiveness of librarians in fulfilling this core function and its implication for research productivity, which includes number of publications, quality of research, and timely completion of research works. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the relationship between librarians' ability to identify information and research productivity.

Statement of the Problem

The ability to identify information needs is one of first step and core dimensions of information literacy skills. This ability is critical to supporting research process and research productivity. However, observation shows that despite the abundance of information resources in both print and electronic formats, librarians in many academic institutions still experience difficulties in identifying relevant and up-to-date information for their research. This raises concerns about whether librarians possess adequate skills to identify their information needs and connect them to appropriate resources. Furthermore, while several studies have examined information literacy in general, there is limited empirical evidence on how specifically the librarians' ability to identify information relates to research productivity. Thus, If librarians lack strong identification skills, research output may be delayed, duplicated, or of low quality due to use of irrelevant information. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the relationship between librarians' ability to identify information and research productivity.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the work

1. What is the relationship between librarians' ability to recognize information needs and research productivity in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The null hypotheses were formulated and be tested for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Ho1: There is no significant relationship between librarians' score on ability to recognize information needs and research productivity in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria

Literature Review

The ability to identifying the extent of information need is the starting point of achieving information literacy. Recognition of an information need or problem is the beginning of the solution of a problem. A need is a fact or feeling of the lack of something (Vasudevan, 2012). In defining the extent of information need, an information literate person is able to: identify the information needed, know the various types of information resources, understands the benefits of acquiring information and know the extent of the information he needs" (ALA, 2000). Ojedokun (2014) defined information identification as the investigation of how people search to identify the need and use of information in different contexts, including the workplace and everyday living. Information identification is a deep-seated concept, which includes the creation of new knowledge and new meanings, the transformative act of moulding decisions and influencing others, and the exodus and exchange of information that



challenge the request to satisfy a search need by academic librarians (Dubicki, 2013). This implies that librarians need to developed requisite ability to know the type of information they need and is able to source for it conveniently. For librarians to do quality research, they need to possess the ability to identify key concepts, sources of information and the scope of information needed. Otherwise, the research process may become challenging due to lack of direction leading to abandonment or delay.

More so, librarians' ability to identify a problem and select a topic, gives them the leverage to begin the research process effectively. Foster (2014) pointed that the greater challenge of the researchers lies in the recognition of information need. Obasi and Ibegwam (2020) further noted that the ability to recognize the need for information is predicated on the premise that early knowledge of the role of information, scope, and nature of information needed are fundamental requirements for achieving success in any task. According to Ilevbare, Enang and Ukpanah (2022) in carrying out academic research, an academic librarian can identify a need for information and find such information that will assist him/her to response to research questions and also develop an information search habit so that new and existing information in that field will be appropriately and adequately identified. Nevertheless, using fundamental information to classify the search process and taking personal authority for an information search, and managing time efficiently to complete a search are core efforts of information identification skills in initialising an academic research output by academic librarians (Ogunbodede and Oniovosa, 2019).

In librarianship, research plays a vital role in addressing emerging needs, discovering trends, solving problems, and dealing with challenges in the field. Hiebert, Berk, Gallimore and Lefevre (2022) noted that research is the systematic and structured process of inquiry that generates new knowledge, understanding, and insights to address societal challenges. Adetayo (2023) maintained that the ability of scholars to engage in research is often assessed through research productivity, which reflects the quantity and quality of scholarly outputs such as publications, conference presentations, grants, and collaborative projects. Therefore, Haruna and Ogunleye, (2023) defined research productivity as the extent of scholarly publication output to which librarians publishes books, chapter(s) in books, articles in reputable journals, conference proceedings, gets research grants, perform editorial duties, participate in public debates and commentaries over time. However, librarians' enthusiasm and capacity to achieve and maintain a scholarly record is inconsistent. While some librarians have excelled in this aspect of their responsibilities, others have struggled (Walters, 2016; O'Brien and Cronin, 2016). This have underscored the need for balancing the challenging task of work load and research productivity. Hence, to do quantity and quality research, librarians need to become information literate, since research productivity depends on the ability to identify information needs.

Little Studies have reviewed the relationship between the ability to identify information needs and research productivity of librarians. Giginyu and Echedom (2024) revealed that there is significant strong positive relationship between lecturers' score on the ability to recognize information needs and research productivity in the federal universities in the North-west, Nigeria. The result showed that information identification skills have a positive significant relationship with the research output of academic librarians with p-value = 0.00, and Phi coefficient of 2.49 indicating a very large extent of a positive relationship. Obasi and Ibegwam (2020) conducted a study on the recognition of information need indicators and graduate students' research practices in university libraries of South-East, Nigeria. Ilevbare, Enang and Ukpanah (2022) investigated the information identification skills and research output of academic librarians in universities in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. Findings of the study showed that the individual recognition of information need indicators (recognition of nature



of information need, and recognition of scope of information need) have significant influence on graduate students' research practices at varying degrees. Also, the study showed a significant combined influence of information need indicators on the graduate students' research practices.

The study of Ikenwe and Anaehobi (2020) found out that there was low positive relationship between abilities to identify the extent of information, access information in the utilization of digital library resources in Federal Universities, Southern Nigeria. The findings of Yazon, AngManaig, Buama and Tesoro (2019) revealed that there was a strong and significant relationship between faculty members' ability to recognize the information need and research productivity of the educators in Laguna, Philippines.

However, the ability to identify information is highly paramount to research productivity and as such, if librarians are unable to identify when information is needed, it may be detrimental to their information gathering, which may result in low-quality research outputs. This why the study tends to assess the relationship between ability to identify information needs and research productivity among librarians in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Methodology

The descriptive correlational research design was employed. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the relationship that exist between variables of the study without manipulation. The population of the study comprised number of librarians in 7 federal universities of South-South, Nigeria. The total number of librarians in these universities was 121 librarians. Total enumeration sampling method was adopted. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha and Kuder-Richardson methods. The instrument of the study was both cognitive test and structured questionnaire. Cognitive test solicited information on the ability of librarians to recognize information needs. While structured questionnaire was for research productivity of the librarians. The instruments were analyzed using inferential statistics. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient r was used to answer the research questions. The multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

Results

Table 1: Pearson Product Correlation on librarians' ability to recognize information needs and research productivity

Variable	N	Research Productivity (r)	Remark
Information Identification	113	0.113	Low positive relationship

Table 1 shows the relationship between librarians' ability to recognize information needs and research productivity. The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between information recognition and research productivity, $r = .113$, $N = 113$. This indicates that respondents who demonstrated higher levels of information identification tended to have slightly higher research productivity; however, the strength of the relationship was very weak.

Testing Hypotheses

Table 2: Relationship between librarians' score on ability to recognize information needs and research productivity

Variable	N	Research Productivity (r)	α - level	Sig. Value	Remark
Information Identification	113	0.113	0.05	.266	Non-significant low positive relationship



Table 2 shows the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis revealed that, there was a weak positive relationship between librarians' score on ability to recognize information needs and research productivity in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria, $r = .113$, $p = .266$. Since the obtained p -value (.266) was greater than the significance level of .05, the relationship was not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. It was concluded that information identification was not significantly related to research productivity among the respondents.

Discussion of Findings

The result of study revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between information recognition and research productivity among librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This indicates that respondents who demonstrated higher levels of information identification tended to have slightly higher research productivity. This study is in line with the findings of Ilevbare, Enang and Ukpanah (2022) that there was a relationship between academic librarians' recognition of information needs and research productivity. The study also supports the findings of Giginyu and Echedom (2024) that there was a significant strong positive relationship between lecturers' score on the ability to recognize information needs and research productivity in the federal universities in the North-west, Nigeria.

In order to carry out quality and quantity research, librarians need to have a good ability to recognize the information materials that are tailored to their information needs and how to meet their needs. Therefore, information recognition skills are basically required skills by academic librarians in their explorative process of research. However, the definition of the problem in a research work gives the researcher the clear understanding of the scope of work needed in that research, if not the researcher may digress from the focus of the research. The problem is usually stated precisely as the research topic before other explanatory procedures like the problem statement and the research objective. It is this problem definition that necessitate the need for information. Obasi and Ibegwam (2020) further noted that the ability to recognize the need for information is predicated on the premise that early knowledge of the role of information, scope, and nature of information needed are fundamental requirements for achieving success in any task. Rafique (2019) emphasized the need for academic staff to possess skills needed to identify a need for information and find such information that will assist them to response to research questions.

The corresponding hypothesis revealed a weak positive relationship between information recognition and research productivity among librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This aligned with Giginyu and Echedom whose hypothesis testing confirmed a significant strong positive relationship between lecturers' score on the ability to recognize information needs and research productivity in the Federal universities in the North-West, Nigeria. This finding also agreed with Ilevbare, Enang and Ukpanah (2022) who found that information identification skills have a positive significant relationship with the research output of academic librarians.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there is a weak positive relationship between librarians' score on ability to recognize information needs and research productivity in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This implies that knowing how to find information only slightly helps librarians understudy in their research productivity. The study recommends that university management should as a matter of interest and concern should carve out dedicated time and provide structural incentives for research, reducing the daily operational fatigue that stalls research productivity.



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