

**EQUAL GENDER PARTICIPATION OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN PROVISION
OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN
NIGER STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigated equal gender participation of academic librarians in provision of library and information services in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library of Federal University of Technology, Minna and Abubakar Gimba Library of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. These universities were chosen based on their status (i.e. Federal and State owned institutions). Objectives of the study were to: identify the types of library and information services provided in the university libraries and find out if there was equal gender participation of academic librarians in the provision of library and information services in the university libraries in Niger State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The entire forty-two (42) academic librarians in the two (2) university libraries were used as the respondents in the study. Questionnaire was the instrument used for the collection of data. The data collected were tabulated and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation. The findings revealed that exhibition, display and counselling services were not provided and there is no equal gender participation of academic librarians in the provision of library and information services in the two university libraries under study. The study recommended that management of the two university libraries should also provide exhibition, display and counselling services and should be gender conscious in the subsequent employment of librarians in order to balance the gender equality of academic librarians in the two (2) university libraries under study.

Keywords: *Academic librarians; Equal gender participation; Library and information Services Provision; University libraries; Niger State; Nigeria.*

Introduction

Gender is a state of being male or female typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. According to Mokhlis cited in Simisaye, Awodoyin and Osisanwo (2018), gender is a term that is often used when differentiating male creatures from female ones biologically which is most primarily applied to human beings. Gender equality means that male and female have equal power and equal opportunities for financial independence, access to resources, decision-making, education, effect change and personal development. In library and information services perspective, gender equality can be defined as a phenomenon where male and female have equal opportunities and rights to provide and access library and information services for educational development. Gender balance is the state of having the same or a sufficient number of women and men at all levels within the organization to ensure equal representation and participation in all areas of activity and interest.

Library is an indispensable aspect of education that is widely connected to other existing aspects of education and which intends to inculcate into the public the methods of processing, organising, preserving, retrieving, disseminating and using information and its resources for individual and group sustainable development across the globe. For this to be achieved, there are different types of libraries such as school libraries serving the school children, special libraries serving special patrons, academic libraries established in tertiary institutions and public libraries which comprises national libraries and state library boards that are regarded as peoples' university. Emphasis would be given to university libraries on this study. Information is generally believed to be power and libraries or information centres rendered a lot of information services to individuals regardless of the area of specialisation. Librarians play a lot of role in the

provision of information services to the clientele for learning, teaching and research to take place any institution of learning (Ahmed cited in Adamu, Babalola and Dogara, 2018).

University libraries refer to those libraries established in universities to support and strengthen the academic programmes of such institutions of learning as it contributes to the total development of its user's community by broadening their intellectual horizons and inculcating in them a lasting desire to study and carry out research. The main functions of university library is to acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate information. Furthermore, university libraries also provide information services such as circulation services, reference services, technical services, serials services, user education, reprographic services, CAS, SDI, referral services, information technology services and document delivery service. Oyewusi and Oyeboade, (2009) defined university libraries as the academic heart of the university system and its basic purpose is to provide students and faculty with material assistance and enabling environment that facilitate teaching, learning and research activities in the universities.

Information is a statement or collection of figures and letters that has meaning to the recipient. Information can also be described as data which is subjected to some processing functions and have the ability of answering users' questions, either summarized, recorded or collected that would assist in making decisions. According to Shera cited in Ezekiel and Saleh (2014), defined information as that which is transmitted by the act or process of communication be it a message, signal or stimulus. It assumes a response in the receiving organism and therefore possessed response potentials. Information services are services provided by the libraries which draws attention to information possessed in the library in expectation of demand. This is done by preparing and circulating new sheets, displaying current arrivals, use of notice boards, abstracts and headlines of articles in current periodicals etc. Library services are therefore regarded as

necessary for the educational needs of students, the research needs of scholars and the leisure reading needs of the literates (Elonye, 2013). In this study, academic librarians are considered to be those librarians who undergo training in the library schools and obtained first degree and above in library and information science and engaged in library services, which is the organization and management of information needs of the library users or clientele.

Statement of the Problem

University libraries are depositories of information for the educational development of individuals at tertiary level with its significant contributions to the academic achievement of lecturers and students in tertiary institutions through Provision of library and information services. Equal gender participation of academic librarians could be a factor in provision of library and information services in the university libraries under study. Dayioglu and Turut-Asik (2004) cited in Joseph (2018) carried out a study on gender differences in academic achievement in a large public university in Turkey which reported a high gender disparity in various spheres of public life and the patriarchal social structure in turkey as a major factor that may lead to poorer academic performance among female university students. This may be considered significant to investigate the provision of library and information services by academic librarians on equal gender participation in the libraries under study. It is in the light of the above that, this study is carried out.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the types of library and information services provided in the university libraries in Niger State.

2. Find out if there is equal gender participation of academic librarians in the provision of library and information services in the university libraries in Niger State.

Literature Review

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (World Health Organisation, 2002). Gender roles and power relations and the power relations they reflect are a social construct – they vary across cultures and through time, and thus are amenable to change. Gender roles are the particular economic, social roles and responsibilities considered appropriate for women and men in a given society. Gender roles and characteristics do not exist in isolation, but are defined in relation to one another and through the relationship between women and men, girls and boys (Medical Women's International Association, 2002). Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both, women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups women and men (for example: women belonging to ethnic minorities, lesbian women or women with disabilities). Gender equality is both, a human rights principle and a precondition for sustainable, people-centered development (MWIA, 2002). Gender equality also known as sexual equality is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making; and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of gender. Gender equality, equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and

favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities (International Labour Organisation, 2010). Similarly, gender equality is the state or condition that affords women and men equal enjoyment of human rights, socially valued goods, opportunities and resources, allowing both sexes the same opportunities and potential to contribute to, and benefit from, all spheres of society educational, economic, political, social, and cultural (Joseph, 2018).

Library and information services are key actors in providing unhindered access to essential resources for economic and cultural advance. In doing so, they contribute effectively to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom, safeguarding democratic values and universal civil rights. They encourage social inclusion, by striving to serve all those in their user communities regardless of age, gender, economic or employment status, literacy or technical skills, cultural or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability. The communities they serve may be geographically based or, increasingly, linked only by technology and shared interests (IFLA, 2003).

Library services are regarded as social services which are bound to stimulate the reading habit of the society, including people in the academic environment. Library services present a picture of remarkable variety and play an important role in the educational, economic, cultural and recreational life of the entire population. There is no doubt that libraries are in the business of providing services to its user's community and the services provided should be in conformity with the needs of its patrons (Bassegy cited in Abdulhamid, Abu and Isah 2017). The patrons

consist of male and female whom because of them the library is established to provide services in respective of the gender affiliation. The extent to which information services effectively and efficiently satisfy the needs of the patrons will determine equal gender participation in the provision of library services. Library and information services such as circulation services, reference services, technical services, serials services, user education, reprographic services, CAS, SDI, referral services, information technology services and document delivery service are significant services that make the library to be attractive to users as gender participation would also be a determinant in making it more attractive to the users, because users constitute both male and female.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The survey research design is used because survey type of research is characterized by population and use of data collection instrument. The survey research is also used to measure a situation with a view to correcting inadequacies or effecting improvement (Oyedum, Abedoh, Saka and Alhassan 2015). The entire forty-two (42) academic librarians in the two (2) university libraries were used as the respondents in the study. This is necessary because Bernard (2012) reported this idea by asserting that if a population of the study is less than two hundred (200), the entire population should be used for the study. The research instrument used was questionnaire. Data collected were tabulated and analysed using frequency counts, percentages mean scores and standard deviation. The entire academic librarians of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida library of the Federal University of Technology, Minna and Abubakar Gimba library of the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai form the population of this study.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Available Library and Information Services in the University Libraries

S/N	Library and Information Services	FUTLM	IBBULL
1.	Circulation services	√	√
2.	Reference services	√	√
3.	Technical services	√	√
4.	Serials services	√	√
5.	Exhibition and displays	×	×
6.	Bibliographic services	√	×
7.	User education	√	√
8.	Reprographic services	√	√
9.	Current awareness services (CAS)	√	√
10.	Reserve services (short loan services)	√	×
11.	Selective dissemination of information (SDI)	√	√
12.	Counselling services	×	×
13.	Referral service	√	√
14.	Information Technology Services	√	√
15.	Document delivery service	√	√

Key 1: √ = Available, × = Not Available

Key 2: FUTLM = Federal University of Technology Library, Minna
IBBULL - Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Library, Lapai

Table 1 reveals that library and information services available in the two university libraries included: circulation services, reference services, technical services, serials services, user education, reprographic services, CAS, SDI, referral services, information technology services and document delivery service. Items 6 and 10 indicate that IBBULL do not provide such services. On the other hand, library and information services that were not provided in the two university libraries include: exhibition and display, and counselling services.

The finding reveal that exhibition and display, and counselling services were not provided in the university libraries under study. The finding also reveals that bibliographic service and reserve services were not provided in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Library, Lapai. This finding is similar to that of Idowu cited in Raji (2017) who enumerated library services in the 21st century

academic libraries to include: circulation services, reference services, technical services, serials services, user education, reprographic services, CAS, SDI, referral services, information technology services, document delivery service, exhibition and display, counselling service and bibliographic services. This study disagreed with findings of Abdulhamid, Abu and Isah (2017) who assessed information services provision of staff school libraries in Niger State and found that circulation and reference services were the major information services provided in the school libraries.

Table 2: Equal Gender Participation of Academic Librarians in the Provision of Library and Information Services in the University Libraries

	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-critical	df	P	Decision
Male	28	3.241	.456	0.50	1.78	40	0.05	Reject
Female	14	2.843	.360					

Table 2 reveal that the calculated t- value 0.50 is less than the t-critical value of 1.78 at 0.05 alpha level which indicate significant gender difference and this implies that there is no equal gender participation of academic librarians in the provision of library and information services in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida library of the Federal University of Technology, Minna and Abubakar Gimba library of the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai.

Findings on the equal gender participation of academic librarians in the provision of library and information services revealed a significant gender difference which implies that there is no equal gender participation of academic librarians in the provision of library and information services, i.e. There are more male academic librarians than female academic librarians in the two university libraries under study. This finding corroborate findings from Joseph (2018) study which reported that there is a significant mean difference in the academic achievement of undergraduate medical students at the University of Ibadan in favour of the male students. Similarly, this finding is in line with findings of Raychaudhury, Deborath, Sen and Majumder (2010) cited in Joseph (2018) which reported that gender of students determines their academic achievement.

Conclusion

The study investigated equal gender participation of academic librarians in provision of library and information services in university libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. The concept of gender, gender equality, library and information services and university libraries were highlighted. The study showed that there is gender disparity in the provision of library and information services by academic librarians in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida library of the Federal University of Technology, Minna and Abubakar Gimba library of the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai which was in favour of male academic librarians. This is an indication to the fact that gender of academic librarians should be given priority in the provision of library and information services in the two (2) university libraries under study.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Management of the two university libraries should also provide the following services such as exhibition, display and counselling services as it would help to guide and keep the library users abreast of new things in the libraries.
2. Management of the two (2) universities should be gender conscious in the subsequent employment of librarians in order to balance the gender equality of academic librarians in the two (2) university libraries under study.

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