KNOWLEDGE SHARING STRAIEGIES ADOPTED FOR SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The objective of this study was to review literature on knowledge sharing strategies adopted for service delivery among academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria with a view of improving library services. The systematic literature review approach was adopted for the study which entails the researchers' critical review on literature to gather data relevant to the study from local, national and international journals, conference papers and other sources of literature such as books and online sources and the review revealed the concept of knowledge, knowledge sharing strategies adopted by academic librarians in university libraries, types of services delivered by academic librarians in university libraries and the inhibitors to knowledge sharing practices among academic librarians in university libraries. The study discovered that codification and personalization strategy, communities of practice, knowledge repositories, staff training/human resources development, performance evaluation and/ appraisal strategy, mentorship programs, succession planning, job rotation and social networks were the knowlrdgr sharing strategies adopted for service delivery among academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria. Hence, the study concluded that adopting knowledge sharing strategies is very vital and crucial to the success of every organization aiming at quality service delivery especially university libraries which has become a necessity. Hence, the study recommends that university libraries should institutionalize knowledge sharing strategies through personalization and codification strategies, Provision of well packaged incentives to academic librarians so as to motivate them on knowledge sharing and delivering services of high quality and the library management should devise a means to strengthen the level of trust and mutual understanding among academic librarians so as to make them feel secured and share their knowledge.

Keywords: Knowledge, Knowledge Sharing, Strategies, Academic Librarians. University Libraries

Introduction

Knowledge sharing is an integral part of knowledge management as it is through sharing, that knowledge can be expanded throughout an organization. Considering the fact that organizations thrive on what their employees know, it is apparent that knowledge is a crucial resource that needs to be managed the same way finance for example, is managed. It can help organizations retain their valuable intangible assets that are in the mind of their employees. As such, this relates the need for academic librarians to fully adopt and utilize knowledge sharing for increased productivity and efficient service delivery. Flinchbaugh and Chadwick (2016) describe knowledge sharing as the process of making knowledge available to others by exchanging knowledge among organizational members in order for them to collaborate on organizational tasks, solve problems or implement ideas. It is about effectively converting and transferring specific knowledge held by a member to other members of the organization in a form that can be understood, absorbed and used by organization members who need it to engage in a certain activity, solving problems and quality service delivery.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follow:

1. To identify the knowledge sharing strategies adopted by academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria.
2. To discover the types of services delivered by academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria.
3. To explore the inhibitors to knowledge sharing among academic librarians in university libraries in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is very crucial for the realization of organizational success. Al-Hawamdeh (2015) sees knowledge sharing in a broader perspective as the communication of all types of knowledge including explicit knowledge (information, know-how and know-who) and tacit knowledge (skills and competency). A study conducted by Islam (2013) established that, the capability of sharing knowledge enhances research work significantly; individuals are stimulated to share knowledge to enhance learning and teaching activities. Simply, knowledge sharing denotes to the exchange of knowledge between at least two parties in a reciprocal process allowing reshaping and sense-making of the knowledge in a new context. That is to say, it is the willingness of individuals in an organization to share whatever they have or have created for improving

workers' skills and knowledge which in turn increase workers efficiency and productivity.

Knowledge Sharing Strategies Adopted by Academic Librarians in University Libraries

University libraries today, especially in western countries are increasingly adopting knowledge management practices and knowledge sharing strategies to remain competitive in the knowledge based economy (KBE). Knowledge sharing strategies (KSS) refers to what needs to be done to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Holsapple & Joshi, 2011). The SECI Model of Knowledge Creation of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) indicates that knowledge sharing strategies used by employees include resources such as policies, IT infrastructure, staff training, performance evaluation system, mentorship programs, succession planning and job rotation policies and with these, they focus mainly on gaining competencies. However, there are some alternatives to determine a proper knowledge sharing strategy used by academic librarians in university libraries such as:

- **Codification and Personalization Strategy**

The codification strategy focuses on storing explicit knowledge in databases so that it can be accessed and used by other organizational members while, the personalization strategy usually involves sharing tacit knowledge through direct contact with the person in possession of this knowledge. Commonly, it entails acquiring tacit knowledge that cannot be codified and stored in a database (Atkova & Tuomela-Pyykkönen, 2015).

- **Communities of Practice**

This is a knowledge sharing strategy which enables organizations to tap into knowledge that is generated and held collectively. Findings from a study by Wei (2017) on factors that impact employees' online knowledge sharing in business sectors in U.S.A, reveal that people are interested in using CoP as a knowledge sharing strategy since it gives them an opportunity to draw up a list of people they were interested in and set up their own communities.

- **Knowledge Repositories**

Knowledge repositories as a strategy for knowledge sharing facilitate the documentation of relevant operational knowledge in order to mitigate attrition challenges and aid in the learning period for new employees (Business Consulting Services, 2003). Townley (2017) states that library staff are learning to be proactive in the delivery of intellectual knowledge and would need to use many of these systems to share operational knowledge within the library.

- **Staff training/Human Resources Development**

Staff training as a knowledge sharing strategy enables employees to update their skills and to promote knowledge sharing through the exchange of experiences and new ideas (Parry, 2018). Kang (2003) cited in Cabrera and Cabrera (2005),

emphasize that staff training is a very useful strategy in retaining organizational knowledge and intellectual intelligence.

- **Performance Evaluation and/ Appraisal Strategy**

A study done by Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) in the United State of America (U.S.A) on fostering KS practices confirmed that performance-based pay rewarding strategy encouraged 60% of employees to share tacit knowledge. This is supported by Jain (2015) who believes that linking knowledge sharing with performance appraisal increases the opportunity to share knowledge.

- **Mentorship Programs**

Mentorship programs as a knowledge sharing strategy enable senior employees to share their knowledge, specific insights and skills with their juniors within a short space of time, such that when the experienced employees leave the organization the knowledge is retained within the organization (Rusanow, 2014, cited in Level & Mach, 2015). However, Level and Mach's (2015) in a study in the U.S.A on peer mentoring on academic librarians found that peer mentoring with top-down support contribute time to the group as part of the regular workday routine.

- **Succession Planning**

Succession planning refers to the attempt to plan for the right number of skilled employees to cover retirements, death, serious illness or promotion and any new positions which may be created in future organization plans (Sambrook, 2015). Topper (2015), in a study in libraries in the U.S.A., revealed that libraries were making succession planning a priority of human resource management strategy to retain individuals' knowledge through codification and tacit knowledge sharing as knowledge is stored in people's minds specifically that of the owner.

- **Job Rotation**

Job rotation as a strategy for knowledge sharing is a form of staff development to improve the professional skills of staff (Jarvi & Uusitalo, 2014). A study on job rotation among nursing personnel at Helsinki University in Finland, by Jarvi and Uusitalo (2014), reveals that staff benefited from job rotation by acquiring competencies and skills through sharing of experiences and expertise. This is supported by Farrant, Earney and Martins (2019) who believe that job rotation gives employees an opportunity to gain a wider picture of the whole operation of an organization.

- **Social Networks**

Social networks such as: Web 2.0-4.0, video-conferencing, groupware such as intranets/internet, portals, knowledge directories, databases, search engines, Facebook and Twitter are the most common tools that support knowledge sharing, interaction and communication among users in different places with a common interest or goal (Balubaid, 2013). McManus (2017), in the U.S.A, found that university libraries have leveraged the power of Web 2.0 as a strategy for knowledge sharing to provide better services to users and to improve

communication between staff and users in accessing and sharing online electronic resources and/databases.

Types of Services Delivered by Academic Librarians in University Libraries
Library services are the basic services provided in the library and indeed information centers. People need it for their study, research, career making, health care, problem solving, recreation and lifelong learning. Everybody needs qualitative service delivery from the library for some purpose or the other. Omoniwa (2016) states that the aspect of the library services is that of collecting, synthesizing and disseminating up-to-date, accurate and unbiased relevant information and resources available in books, periodicals, bulletins, guides abstracts, indexes, bibliographies, and non-book formats which can be stored and retrieved whenever needed. However, Umoh (2017) highlights and explains the generic services rendered by academic libraries as shown below:

- **Reference Services**

Academic libraries provides qualitative services to its users by means of answering reference questions (queries) through meeting face-to-face, over the telephone, via the web or by email. Reference services for library users often involve not only answering specific questions but also personalized instruction in the methods of identifying and locating research information resources (Umar, 2018).

- **Circulation /Borrowing Services**

Every library has a circulation desk or counter. It is generally located near the entrance of the library. It is a service point meant for issue and return of books. Circulation desks officers in the library perform multifarious duties which include but not limited to: lending materials to library users, checking in materials returned, monitoring materials for damage and routing them to appropriate staff for repair or replacement, troubleshooting circulation technology and collecting statistics on Library use (Adeyemi, 2015).

- **Bibliographic Verification Services**

This service involves provision of facts about publications rather than people, events or organizations. In providing this service, reference librarian searches his/her bibliographic tools such as indexes, bibliographies, catalogues, etc, to verify that users' information about a document (i.e. bibliographic publication) is correct and complete. Information about date of publications, correct names of authors etc is sometimes wrongly cited. This service is therefore, provided to assist users to verify any of such information (Umar, 2018).

- **Current Awareness Services (CAS)**

These are services provided by university libraries to alert their users about the existence of some current publications or information. Madu (2019) in a publication cited that CAS takes the form of periodic (daily, weekly, etc) listing of publications, monographs and periodical articles within a given subject area.

These publications are circulated among some categories of users or general users of academic libraries in order to notify them about the existence of such information resources contained on the list.

- **Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) Services**

Madu (2018) sees (SDI) as user package reference service mainly for researchers. In some places, it is likened to current awareness services because of its objective of keeping researchers aware of current developments in their areas of specialization. It could also take the form of providing the researchers with table of contents of journal that has just arrived or recently published article or citation on pre-determined topics relevant to the target users.

- **Reprographic Services**

The photocopying is the most frequently requested element of user services in libraries. Information resources such as reference works, rare books, theses, periodicals or heavily used items which are not normally loaned may be photocopied adhering strictly to copyright laws. Akanya (2006) quoting Jack (1985) reveals that another facility for library services includes copying by means of photographic or photocopying equipment these facilities reduce mutilation of books and theft to the barest minimum in the reference sections of university libraries.

- **Technical Services**

Under the technical services, the academic library is seen as providing some technical services to its users. Gbaji (2007) in a paper on technical services in academic libraries in Nigeria highlights some of these services as follow:

(a) Acquisition/collection management: The university libraries in Nigeria acquire, collect and manage the information resources (books and media) as well as making these information resources available for their users in order to meet up with their information needs.

(b) Systems Department: The users of academic libraries in Nigeria gain free access into the systems department of the library such as computers or automation department so as to be able to search the information needs online.

(c) Cataloguing and classification services: ICTs have made the use of information materials and the nature of information work considerably more effective. This system allows the use of online public access catalogue (OPAC) to provide access to bibliographic sources of information.

(d) Indexing and abstracting services: Indexing services enable users to locate the books that are available in the subject areas they need while abstracting produce the summaries of the contents of reading materials in the library thereby serving as time savers for the library users.

- **Extension/community services**

Apart from the aforementioned services rendered by university libraries, they also extend their services to their immediate communities in which they are situated.

This is done by ways of providing the community users with adequate information resources that would go a long way to cater for their immediate needs and aspirations (Madu, 2018). Libraries also assist the community members to actualize their dreams and aspirations by providing them with information resources that would improve the quality of their lives particularly low-income individuals.

- **Inter-Library Co-operation**

This type of service is usually practiced between two or more libraries with mutual benefits in which the libraries involved come together with an agreement to share and exchange information resources (Edoka, 2000). However, with ICTs development, inter-lending services among librarians in academic library are made easy because request can be processed electronically and it is faster when both borrowing and lending libraries belong to the same electronic utility.

Inhibitors to Knowledge Sharing among Academic Librarians

The difficulty of knowledge sharing among people may be related to multiple factors that influence the sharing of knowledge. Dewah and Mutula (2014) in their study of knowledge retention strategies in public sector organization in sub-Saharan Africa, establish several inhibitors to managing knowledge assets that included lack of appropriate technology, shortage of skills, lack of incentives or rewards to share knowledge and limited commitment from senior management. Basically, inhibitors to knowledge sharing practices arise from a combination of individual, organizational and technological factors (Assefa, 2013).

Individual Inhibitors to Knowledge Sharing amongst Academic Librarians

Team members (academic librarians) may not want to share their knowledge with others, simply because they are not motivated enough (Khalil & Shea, 2012). The relationship between members of a virtual team especially between members of its different sub-teams has an influence that could present a barrier to knowledge sharing practices (Wendling, 2013). Lack of time and poor communication skills are also common barriers to knowledge sharing practices (Assefa, 2013). Moreover, lack of motivation and trust among team members (academic librarians) highly imped the sharing and utilization of knowledge with each other (Phung, 2016). **Organizational Inhibitors to Knowledge Sharing amongst Academic Librarians**

Yao, Kam and Chan (2017), point out that lack of motivation and reward system discourages people to create, share, and use knowledge. However, lack of funds dedicated to the initial investment, development and running/operational maintenance costs of knowledge management systems is a major financial barrier to knowledge sharing practices. Kant and Singh (2018) warn that lack of organizational structure can discourage knowledge sharing activities and approaches. Hence, the structure that does not support individuals to communicate vertically is not knowledge sharing friendly. Long and Fahey (2015) point out that

84 percent of knowledge management projects fail due to lack of management support and as a result, knowledge creation, utilization and sharing is hampered.

Technological Inhibitors to knowledge sharing amongst Academic Librarians

Technology is an enabler of knowledge management activities; if it is not properly designed and managed it becomes an inhibitor to knowledge sharing. This happens when there is lack of technological infrastructure, when technology is complex to use, and lack of skilled staff to design applications, make use of, and also support the technology (Marouf & Khalil, 2015). Similarly, complex and unfriendly systems create communication gaps which hamper knowledge sharing activities (Ghobadi & Mathiassen, 2016). Furthermore, Lack of common knowledge infrastructure and social network discourage the smooth adoption of knowledge sharing practices (Paquette & Desouza, 2011). Therefore, ICTs can become a barrier to knowledge sharing practices unless assessments and efforts are regularly made to ensure that team members' knowledge-sharing needs are met.

Methodology

For the conduct of this paper, the researchers employed systematic literature review method which entails the researchers' critical review on literature to gather data relevant to the study from local, national and international journals, conference papers and other sources of literature such as books and online sources.

Results and Discussion of Study Findings

Knowledge Sharing Strategies Used by Academic Librarians in University Libraries

Literature reviewed on knowledge sharing practices among academic librarians in university libraries show that majority of the authors cited that the knowledge sharing practices employed by academic librarians are: apprenticeship, After Action Review, codification and Personalization strategy, coaching, mentoring, brainstorming, subject-matter experts, leveraging retirees, peer assist, face to face meetings, job rotation and communities of practice. Hence, this study collaborates with the findings of Awodoyin, Osisanwo, Adetoro and Adeyemo (2016) who investigate knowledge sharing behavior of librarians in selected academic libraries in Nigeria where their findings reveal that librarians share knowledge using face-to-face interaction, mobile phones, email and newsletters, which enhances innovation, efficiency, effectiveness, and emotional relief.

Types of Services Delivered By Academic Librarians in University Libraries

Literature reviewed on types of services delivered by academic librarians in university libraries show that majority of the authors cited that the services delivered are: Current Awareness Services (CAS), reference services, technical services, circulation services, reprographic services, bibliographic services,

extension/community services, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and Inter Library Loan (ILL) Services. Hence, this study confirms the findings of Umar (2017), who in a study highlighted the generic services rendered by academic libraries as: circulation services, reference service, current awareness services, reprographic services, technical services, and inter-library co-operation.

Inhibitors to Knowledge Sharing Practices

Literature reviewed on inhibitors to knowledge sharing practices in academic libraries indicate that majority of the authors cited that knowledge sharing practice is inhibited by individual, organizational and technological factors such as: insufficient of trust, knowledge hoarding, poor personal relationships, poor communication skills, lack of skilled staff to use ICT facilities for knowledge sharing, lack of technological infrastructure, poor organization structure and lack of effective communication between staff and management. Hence, this study is in agreement with the findings of Jain (2015) in academic libraries in Taiwan who ascertained that constant budget decline impacted on everything including an absence of reward system, and lacks of incentives were found to be the critical issues and challenges among staff that were investigated.

Conclusion

It has become apparently clear that for any university library to achieve its purpose which is satisfying the needs of its users, its academic librarians must engage in the passionate adoption and use of knowledge sharing strategies so as to deliver services of high quality. Hence, the study explore that enabling knowledge sharing environments were the basics for success and quality service delivery. As such, adoption of knowledge sharing strategies by academic librarians in university libraries can be successful by institutionalization of knowledge sharing through personalization and codification strategies, Provision of well packaged incentives to academic librarians so as to motivate them on knowledge sharing and delivering services of high quality and the library management should devise a means to strengthen the level of trust and mutual understanding among academic librarians so as to make them feel secured and share their knowledge.

Way Foreword

Based on the study review and conclusion, the following recommendations were made;

1. University libraries should institutionalize knowledge sharing through personalization and codification strategies.
2. Provision of well packaged incentives to academic librarians so as to motivate them on knowledge sharing and delivering services of high quality.
3. Library management should devise a means to strengthen the level of trust and mutual understanding among academic librarians so as to make them feel secured and share their knowledge.

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