

A Survey of Gender Composition of Librarian and Research Libraries in Kwara State of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study surveys gender composition in Academic & Research Institute Libraries in Kwara State. An eight-item questionnaire was administered on all librarians in the twelve Academic and Research Institute Libraries. Frequency and relative frequency were used to analyze the data collected. The study, among others, reveals that librarianship is not a female-dominated profession in Academic and Research Institute Libraries in Kwara State, and that only three libraries out of the twelve libraries surveyed were headed by female librarians. It recommends that further studies on gender composition in public libraries should be carried out.

Introduction

Gender is a term used synonymously with sex, though variously explained by different writers and authors; the various explanations, however amount to same meaning. For instance, BBC English Dictionary (1992) simply put it as characteristic of being a male or female; Encarta (2005) describes it as the “sex-role identity used by human to emphasize the distinctions between male and female”; and Encyclopedia Britannica (2002) describes gender as the behavioural, cultural or psychological traits typically associated with one sex. However Shaefer (2002) observed that Gender is such a routine part of our everyday activities that we typically take for granted and only takes notice when someone deviates from conventional behaviour and expectations.

From the various definitions and descriptions above, it is clear that gender is a term used to categorize human being into male and female, or man and woman, as well as masculine and feminine.

Madunagu (2002) asserts that:

To be a feminist is to want for all people female and male liberations from sexist role patterns from sexist dominations and from sexist oppression.

He further adds that “the goals, values and ideals of feminism remain the liberation of society from dehumanization and the loss of fundamental human rights to women”. Thus what is central in defining feminism is the subject matter which does not vary even though the method of analysis or nomenclature may vary.

Gender has an attachment with the socially and historically constructed relations between men and women, as opposed to their biological differences. However, the social relations of gender are mainly

dynamic and change over time, being shaped by cultural, social, political and economic relations of power that affect males and females in all societies (Pereira, 2007).

The categorization of gender brings about the issue of gender roles. A gender role simply means expectations regarding the proper behaviour, attitudes and activities of male and female individual.

Edem (1995) examined the influence of gender on publication output of librarians in Nigerian Universities and found out that the male and female librarians are similar in their academic and work related publication outputs. He further suggested the need to alleviate differential treatment in the work environment of men and women librarians.

Gender role leads to occupational segregation in which certain types of work are stereotyped as “women’s work” and “men’s work”. For instance, professions like nursing, secretariship, cookery, and librarianship are tagged women’s job. Therefore, any man that ventures into such professions is seen as a deviant from his gender role (Gidden, 2005).

There are a number of writers/authors as well as researchers who view librarianship as women’s profession. For instance, Ogunrombi and Pisagih (2003) mentioned the role played by the first two professors of librarianship in Nigeria that are women in fostering library education in Nigeria. Professor F. A. Ogunsheye was appointed in 1973 while Professor B. O. Aboyade was appointed in 1978. They further revealed from review of library literature in Nigeria with dismay, a paucity of materials on women in librarianship despite the fact that some women have made tremendous impact in the profession both at national and international levels.

Harris (1999) sharing the views of Womboh (1999) commented on the perceived negative traits of librarians saying "it is not surprising that this inclination to place the blame for the status of librarianship on the discreditable female qualities of librarians has given rise for a desire among practitioners to escape the female identity of the profession".

Pereira (2007) viewed that there are gender disparities in the decision-making positions in the educational bureaucracy which are almost overwhelmingly held by men. Her study further reveals that no woman has ever held the position of visitor, vested in the President in any University. The Federal Executive Council members and Ministers of Education have been virtually all men. Similarly, the post of Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission has also never been occupied by a woman and of all the Vice-Chancellors of the 21 Federal Universities currently in existence, only three have ever been women. This has a great implication in policy making since the dominance of elite males in the educational bureaucracy include a neglect of women's perspectives as well as the gap between policies on university education and their effectiveness.

Pereira (2007) further opined that the wide gap of female academic staff in some Nigerian Universities over their male counter is alarming and needs the great concern of all the stakeholders in Nigerian education to address the issue. She cited the example, at University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, where the actual number of female staff decreased whilst the number of male staff had more than doubled.

Nwana (1985) lamented that the low representation of women in the Nigerian educational structure. This he stated will therefore cause the country to lose the benefits of the economic potential of women as well as their role in the maintenance and promotion of personal health. In the same vein, the following authors in their various works have cited the contribution of women in their various professions and ranked them low. For instance, In Ukegbu's (1981) Nigeria Who's Who, a 95 page publication, only three women were listed. Osinulu and Jegede (1985) have 281 entries in their work entitled: Who's Who of Nigerian Women. Of the number, only 18 are librarians. In the same vein, Igbo (1989) in his treatise: "Women in the professions", did not list any woman librarian in a 289 page publication (Ogunrombi & Pisagih, 2003).

Reed (2006) however, comments that librarianship has been a traditional woman's occupation. She

furthermore observed that it began as a masculine dominated profession but was feminized from the late 19th Century.

Equal opportunities in librarianship are viewed in the context of fair play by all as well as similarities between and current status of women in librarianship in Britain and in Australia. It describes the strengths of Burrington's research, and how it has extended previous similar research, as well as suggesting further, future areas of relevance. (Tilley, 1988).

William Fisher's (1997) revealed an interesting statistic within the profession and addressed a misconception about male in leadership roles in library management. He was puzzled by the fact that men are reported as holding the majority of managerial positions, since the profession was predominantly female. However, it is important to note that in chief librarian positions in many university libraries and those designated as Research Libraries, men still outnumber women, the men are in the highest and managerial positions.

Furthermore, Fisher (1997) expressed that women are in the majority in librarianship, but are not given proportional number of prestigious positions within the field. It is against this background that the researchers wish to survey gender composition in both Academic and Research Institute Libraries in Kwara State.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to find out if libraries in Academic and Research Institute Libraries is male or female dominated. Specifically, the study aims at:

- (i) finding out the number of male and female librarians in these libraries;
- (ii) finding out the rank/cadre of the male and female respondents;
- (iii) finding out the age group composition of the male and female respondents;
- (iv) finding out the highest professional qualification of the respondents.

Methodology

Survey research method was adopted for this study. An 8-item questionnaire is used to elicit information on bio data of librarians in academic and research institute libraries in Kwara State. Copies of the questionnaire administered directly on the respondents by the researchers themselves

and their research assistants. Out of 60 copies of questionnaires distributed to librarians, only 44 (73.33%) were found useful while the remaining 16

(26.64%) were not properly completed and so they were discarded.

Profile of Libraries

Name of Institution	Year of Estab.	Status of Library	No. of Academic Staff (Gender Composition)		
			F	M	TOTAL
University of Ilorin Library	1976	Academic	6	9	15
Kwara State Polytechnic Library	1973	Academic	1	3	4
Federal Polytechnic – Offa	1992	Academic	-	6	6
College of Education Ilorin Library	1978	Academic	1	4	5
College of Education Oro Library	1982	Academic	-	3	3
College of Education Lafiagi Library	1992	Academic	-	1	1
College of Arabic & Islamic Legal Studies Library	1992	Academic	1	2	3
University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital Library	1976	Academic	1	-	1
Agricultural and Rural Management Library	N/A	Institute Library	-	1	-
National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization	1974	Institute Library	1	-	1
Nigerian Stored Products Research Institution Library	1945	Institute Library	-	1	-
Michael Imoudu National Institute of Labour Studies Library	1986	Institute Library	3	-	3
			14	30	44

The twelve libraries that constitute the population of this study are University of Ilorin Library, Ilorin, established in 1976; Kwara State Polytechnic Library, established in 1973; Federal Polytechnic Library, established in 1992; College of Education Library, Ilorin, established in 1978; College of Education Library, Oro, established in 1982; College of Education Library, Lafiagi, established in 1992; College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies Library, established in 1992; University of

Ilorin Teaching Hospital Library, established in 1976; Agricultural and Rural Management Library, National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization established in 1974; Nigerian Stored Products Research Institution Library established in 1945; and Michael Imoudu National Institute of Labour Studies Library established in 1986. Of all these libraries, eight (8) are academic and four (4) are research institute libraries.

Findings and Discussions

TABLE 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Name of Library	Type of Lib	Freq. Male	Relative Freq. %	Freq. Female	Relative Freq. %	Total Freq.	Total Freq. %
University of Ilorin Library	A	9	20.5	6	13.6	15	34.1
Kwara State Polytechnic Library	A	3	6.8	1	2.3	4	9.1
Federal Polytechnic – Offa	A	6	13.6	-	-	6	13.6
College of Education Ilorin Library	A	4	9.1	1	2.3	5	9.1
College of Education Oro Library	A	3	6.8	-	-	3	6.8
College of Education Lafiagi Library	A	1	2.3	-	2.3	1	2.3
College of Arabic & Islamic Legal Studies Library	A	2	4.6	1	-	3	6.8
University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital Library	A	Nil	-	1	-	1	2.3
Agricultural and Rural Management Library	R	1	2.3	-	2.3	1	2.3
National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization	R	Nil	-	1	2.3	1	2.3
Nigerian Stored Products Research Institution Library	R	1	2.3	-	-	1	2.3
Michael Imoudu National Institute of Labour Studies Library	R	Nil	-	3	6.8	3	6.8
Total		12	30	14	36.3	44	100

Keywords: A - Academic
R - Research

Table II: Gender Ranking and Status Distribution of Respondents

Rank	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq	R. Freq	Freq	R. Freq	Freq	R. Freq
Univ./College/Chief Librarian	9	20.45%	3	6.82%	12	27.27%
Deputy University Librarian	5	11.36%	2	4.56%	7	15.91%
Principal Librarian	2	4.55%	3	6.82%	5	11.36%
Senior Librarian	4	9.09%	3	6.82%	7	15.91%
Librarian I	5	11.36%	2	2.27%	3	6.82%
Librarian II	2	4.55%	1	2.27%	3	6.82%
Assistant Librarian	3	6.82%	-	0.00%	3	6.82%
	30		14		44	100.00%

A cursory look at the table I above reveals that University of Ilorin has the largest population of Librarians when compared to other Academic Libraries in the state. The reason for this may be attributed to its size, and students/staff population, and academic activities. The University is followed by Federal Polytechnic, Offa with 6 Librarians. There are 4 Librarians in College of Education Ilorin, 4 in Kwara State Polytechnic, 3 in College of Education, Oro, 1 in College of Education, Lafiagi, while the College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies has 2 Librarians. Michael Imoudu National Institute of Labour Studies Library has 3 Librarians, and other Research Institute Libraries have 1 Librarian each.

The table also reveals that 30 of the respondents (63.7%) are male while 14 (36.3%) are female. This shows that male Librarians outnumber their female counterparts. Three (3) of the Research Libraries are headed by female, and the Michael Imoudu National Institute of Labour Studies Library has 3 Librarians, all females.

As shown in Table II, 9 (20.45%) of the 12 Head of Libraries are male while 3 (6.82%) are females. This finding confirms Jones and Goulding's (1999) finding that "despite the image of librarianship as a female profession, women are not proportionally represented at the highest level of management". Librarianship has an intensive concentration of women workers, but yet, the upper positions are not dominated by women.

Table III: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq	R. Freq	Freq	R. Freq	Freq	R. Freq
Below 35	-	-	1	2.3	1	2.3
36 – 40	5	11.4	3	6.8	8	18.2
41 – 45	9	20.5	3	6.8	12	27.3
46 – 50	8	18.2	4	9.1	11	25.0
51 and above	8	18.2	3	6.8	11	25.0
Total	30	68.3	14	31.8	44	100.1

Table IV – Highest Professional Qualification

Qualification	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq	R. Freq	Freq	R. Freq	Freq	R. Freq
Ph.D	1	2.25	1	2.25	2	4.5
MLS	14	31.8	6	13.6	20	45.5
BLS	15	34.5	7	15.9	22	50
TOTAL	30	68.2	14	31.8	44	100

Table III reveals that majority of the respondents fall between age 41 and 45, and 46 – 50 age groups with each having 12 (27.3%) and 11 (25.0%) respondents respectively. In other words, 24 (54.6%) of the respondents fall between these age groups, followed by age group 51 (20.5) and above with 11 (25%) respondents. A total of 9 (20.5%) respondents fall below 41 years old. What this presupposes is that there are fewer young librarians in Academic and Research Libraries in the State.

Table IV reveals that 22 (50%) of the Librarians possess first degree in Library Science (BLIS), however, 20 (45.5%) have their Masters Degree. Interestingly, 1 (4.5%) librarian each from male and female respondents have Ph.D as their highest qualification.

Summary of Findings

This study report, an attempt to investigate gender composition in the twelve Academic and Research Institute Libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria. The following were the findings of the study:

1. Male Librarians outnumbered female Librarians in the academic and research libraries in the state.
2. Majority of the libraries, academic and research institutes libraries are headed by male librarians. Specifically, nine (9) of such libraries are headed by male librarians, while the remaining three are headed by females.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The finding from this study indicates that male librarians are more than their female counterparts contrary to the earliest impression that librarianship is a female-dominated profession. The study also shows that male librarians are more at the helms of affairs in the libraries studied.

Based on the findings, the following suggestions were recommended among others:

- (i) Those female librarians should be encouraged and motivated so as to stand the test of time in their working environment.
- (ii) It is also recommended that more female graduates should be considered for employment in the sampled libraries.

Suggestion for Further Study

This work, therefore, recommends a further study be conducted in other types of library to determine the number, ratio and percentage of male and female librarians being employed in their respective employment.

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