

OCCUPATIONAL FRUSTRATION VARIABLES OF THE LIBRARIANS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

BY

Oyintola Isiaka Amusa, Abdsalam, A. Salman and Florence Olabisi Ajani

Abstract

Frustrations abound in virtually all human engagements and professions, library and information services inclusive. Consequently, this study employed a survey research method to investigate the incidence of occupational frustration variables among librarians in the public owned university in South-West Nigeria, thirteen University libraries were involved. 253 librarians from these institutions responded to the questionnaire used to gather data. The study confirmed the existence of occupational frustrations variables among the librarians. Some of these are stress, techno-stress, poor motivation, poor working environment, and infrastructural problem. The study in conclusion proffered nine cogent recommendations towards alleviating or reducing the incidence of occupational frustrations among the librarians. Some of these are provision of adequate funding for the libraries, involvement of librarians in decision making and provision of continuous education and training opportunities for the librarians.

Introduction

Human resources constitute an indispensable variable in any organization, including libraries and information centers. To achieve good performance and appreciable level of productivity, work environments must be devoid of frustrations and stress in any form. Human resources in library work in team with other non-human resources to achieve the goals of libraries. Human resources carry out readers' services and other behind the screen activities that constitute pivot of library and information services. In a nutshell, library human resources collect information sources, organize, preserve and make them available to library public/users. Also, library personnel have the skill and expertise in evaluating and anticipating users' needs. These are accomplished through selection and acquisition of relevant information sources; technical processing of acquired resources, information services, collaboration with faculties to develop new and customized services, and provision of faster and more convenient access to collections. To effectively carry out these functions, library human resource/personnel would have been equipped with the following: General reference skill, human relations skills, general bibliography skill, basic library education; analytical and research skills; organization of information and special reference materials; subject specialty, to facilitate in-depth collection development; library issues, systems analysis and automation, and management issues-supervisory and statistical skill (Birdsall 2001). Furthermore, it can be concluded that the library personnel need the following skills to be able to effectively carry out the functions expected of them: strong technical and technological pace that included knowledge of the appropriate selection and application of technology to solve information problem, database design and the principles of

organization of information; understanding of the characteristics of information; understanding of the characteristics of information seeking behaviour, and information generation activities within the various discipline; skills in identifying and analyzing the information needs of various constituencies served and how those information need would be met through the complex information agencies, understanding of the generation, production and distribution of information and of the changing paradigm as such occur from print-based information production to other modes of production and dissemination; and communication theory and its application to information repackaging (Woodsworth and Lester (1991)). The relevance of library personnel to the achievement of library's goals and objectives cannot be over emphasized. They are the activators of functions and provider of However; the extents to which these are attainable depend on the level of satisfaction, motivation, and fulfillment the personnel have with their jobs. Furthermore, the level of frustration and dissatisfaction among the personnel should be negligible if not totally absent. Thus, this study is focused on identifying the occupational frustration variables among the academic librarians in Nigeria, and their impact on the productivity and organizational commitment of the librarians.

Statement of the Problem

In the recent years, it has been observed by the researchers that productivity and organizational commitment are declining in the libraries they are working and, have worked. It is obvious from the attitudes of the librarians that they are working or they have worked with. The obvious consequences of this are indifferent attitudes to work, absenteeism on flimsy excuse, lateness to work, lack of interest in uses and absence of organizational commitment. In the quest to find out the causes of low productivity

and lack of commitment to their organizations, this study focused on finding out occupational frustration variables confronting the librarians.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the variables responsible for the frustration of the librarians in public universities in south-west Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. find out the demographic variables of the librarians in public universities in south-west Nigeria
2. identify the variables responsible for the frustration and lack of commitment of librarians in public universities in south-west Nigeria;
3. find out the perceived influence of the variable on their productivity of librarians in public universities in south-west Nigeria; and
4. ascertain the impact of the variable on their organizational commitment;

Research Questions

Arising from the above objectives, the following research questions are to be answered in the study:

1. What are the demographic variables of librarians in public universities in south-west Nigeria?
2. What are the occupational frustration variables confronting librarians in public universities in south-west Nigeria?
3. What are the perceived influences of the variables on the productivities of librarians in public universities in south-west Nigeria?
4. What is the impact of the variables on the organizational commitment of the librarians in public universities in south-west Nigeria?

Literature Review

Motivation of library personnel cannot be underplayed, if the best is expected from them. Odunewu(2005) examined the level of motivation in a Nigerian academic library, and found that motivators such as good work environment, opportunity to acquire more education while on the job; improved remuneration and job security, are necessary for enhanced productivity. He however reported that the respondents are less satisfied with the level of availability of these motivators. Abifarin(1997) reported a survey conducted to investigate the level of motivation among librarians

and para-professional staff in Nigerian university libraries. Major variables considered are training opportunities, frequency of development, work environment, promotion prospects, sabbatical leave, communication, and management style. His findings revealed a general dissatisfaction with all the variables expect frequency of development (salaries, job security etc.). Odunewu(2005) confirmed this when he state that:

the salaries that the library staff earns and their perceived job security are the only motivating factors keeping Olabisi Onabanjo University library staff commitment to duties.

Alemna(2005), while discussing the digital information challenges in African libraries, posited that serious infrastructure issues need to be resolved in order to establish more digital library components in African libraries. He asserted that infrastructural problems exist in Africa. This he attributed to unfavorable prevailing economic conditions in African countries. In Nigeria, Akporhonor (2005) observed that most libraries receive less funding from their parent institutions. She suggested alternative fees, donations, and pricing of information services. Harper (2000), while writing on "Managing techno stress in UK libraries" stated that the introduction of the internet and its adoption by librarian have brought physical and emotional stress to the libraries. These have resulted in higher level of absenteeism and turnover, higher list of retraining new staff and increase litigation costs related to work place stress. He also identified two forms of techno stress affecting librarians as being the physical and psychological. Examples of physical form are complaint of headache, back strain, eyestrain, repetitive strain injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, and muscular dysfunction; while the psychological form include feeling drained, information overload, over-identifying with technology, under work, and engagement in routine jobs etc. Kupersmith (2006), in an online survey confirmed that techno stress existed in the library setting. More than 59% of the librarians surveyed felt that stress had increased in the past five years and almost two- third of the respondents believed that the problem was somewhat serious. The leading causes as identified by the study are information overload, networking problem, security issue and computer hardware, and ergonomics.

Melchoinda (2007) observed that the internet was also causing a sense of job insecurity among the librarians. Some librarians feared that they would no longer be needed as library users would be able to

use internet without their help. Some were more flexible, smarter, and better trained in technologies. The transition from automation to digitization meant that librarians had to acquire new skills and competencies and be educated in new technologies, which in turn added a further burden and stress to them. Organizational commitment is defined as the extent to which an employee identified with and is involved in a particular organization. It is characterized by a strong belief and acceptance of the organization's goals and values (identification) willingness to exert a considerable amount of effort on behalf of the organization (involvement); and strong desire to remain in the organization (loyalty). (Mowday, Steers and Porter 1979). Meyer and Allen (1991) described organizational commitment as a psychological state, which characterizes the relationship of the employees to the organization. This has implications on the employee's decision to remain or continue membership in the organization. They identified affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. On organizational commitment among librarians, states that level of organizational commitment is significantly influenced by career stages, type of library work setting, and number of dependent among librarians (McCormick (2000). Furthermore, Burd (2003) concluded that more committed and satisfied

librarians have been found in libraries that support participation management, open communication, and opportunities for achievement.

Research Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for this study and the only instrument used to gather data was questionnaire; designed to obtain data that could be used to provide answers to the research questions. It is divided into three sections. Section A focuses on the demographic variables of respondents; Section B is on occupational frustration variables, Section C deals with perceived influence of the variables on respondents' productivities, and organizational commitment. The estimated population of the respondents was 300; that is, at least 23 respondents per University. There are thirteen University involved in the study. The study therefore adopted total enumeration. Consequently, three hundred copies of the questionnaire were produced and randomly distributed to the librarians working in academic libraries in the universities in south west Nigeria. Copies of the questionnaire were given to all available librarians in all the university libraries during the visits of the researchers to complete. Two hundred and fifty three (253) copies were duly completed and returned. All the returned copies were found useable for the analysis.

Data Analysis and Discussions

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	106	42
Female	147	58
Total	253	100

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Divisions/Departments in the Library

Department/Division	Frequency	%
Collection Development/Acquisition	36	14
Technical services/cataloguing	103	41
Readers services(circulation/serial	51	20
Faculty/college libraries	42	17
Automation/e-library	21	08
Total	253	100

Demographic data of the respondents is presented in table 1. The table indicates that there are 106 (42%) males and 147(58%) females. The respondents spread across all the major divisions/sections/departments of academic libraries. Specifically as presented in the above table, 36 (14%) are in collection/acquisitions division; 103 (14%) are in technical services/cataloguing; Readers’/serial services has 51 (20%); faculty/college libraries has 42 respondents (17%) and; 21 respondents (8%) work in automation/e-library.

The respondents years of work experience varied, majority of them, 113 respondents (45%) have spent

between 0-5 years others have gotten between 6-10 years 21 respondent (8%), 72 respondents (28%) have worked for between 11-15 years; 32 respondents (13%) have put in between 21-25 years and; 6 respondents (2%) have worked for 26 years and above. Their status or ranks on the job are deputy university librarian (8 respondents) 3%, principal librarian (32 respondents) 13%, senior librarian (29 respondents) 12%, Librarian I (72 respondents) 28%, Librarian II (101 respondents) 40% and Assistant librarian (11 respondents) 4%. The analyses in tables 1 to 4 above, showed that the respondents cut across gender evenly, divisions in academic libraries, and job status, they are also of varied years of work.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Year of Experience

Year of experience	Frequency	%
0-05 years	113	45
6-10 years	21	08
11-15 years	72	28
16-20 years	32	13
21-25 years	09	04
26 years and above	06	02
Total	253	100

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Status/Rank

Status/Rank	Frequency	%
Deputy University Librarian	08	03
Principal Librarian	32	13
Senior Librarian	29	12
Librarian I	72	28
Librarian II	101	40
Assistant Librarian	11	04
Total	253	100

Table 5: Responses to Occupational Frustration Variables by the Respondents

Frustration variables	Frequency	%
Stress	203	80
Techno stress	136	54
Poor motivation	136	54
Infrastructural problem/poor working environment	221	87
Work overload	199	79
Lack of opportunity for further education	73	29
Absence of opportunity to reach peak of career	235	100
Absence of participating management	101	40
Absence of open communication	93	37
Poor staffing	73	29

Occupational frustration variables are common among the librarians. Nine of these variables were identified and put across to the respondents. The entire respondents were asked to tick as many variables as applicable to them, multiple responses were allowed. Analysis of data revealed that the librarians are exposed to the frustration variables in this order: Absence of opportunity to reach the peak of career, 235 respondents (100%) infrastructural problems and poor working environment, 221 respondents (87%); stress, 203 respondents (80%) work load, 199 respondents (79%); techno stress, 136 respondents (54%); poor motivation, (136 respondents) 54%, absence of participating management (101 respondents) 40%; absence of open communication, (93 respondents) 37%; lack of opportunity for further education, (73 respondents) 29% and poor staffing, (73 respondents) 29%. The issue of the librarian's lack of opportunity to reach the peak of their career was addressed in the study by Salaam and Onifade (2009). Their study confirmed that librarians can only get promotion to the rank of Principal Librarian. They reported thus: In Nigerian University libraries there can be one University Librarian and one or two Deputy University Librarians at a time. Others would have to remain at the Principal Librarian level.

The infrastructural problems and poor working environments reported by the respondents are brought about by the geometric increase in students' enrolment and proliferation of academic programmes in the universities. From observation, most of the libraries cannot accommodate 25% of their students' population as required by the National Universities Commission's standard. These libraries have not witnessed expansion commensurate with user populations: In a nutshell, the library facilities are inadequate, and adequacy of library infrastructure cannot be underplayed. It is obvious that adequacy or inadequacy of infrastructural facilities in the library is directly related to user satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This is however dependent on financial resources to a library.

The incidence of stress and techno-stress in libraries and their consequences on productivities of librarians have been identified and investigated by Harper, Kupersmith(2006), and Melchionda(2007). Also, Lemu(2007) in his study on stress management among academic librarians identified the prevalence of absence of participatory management, open communication, and inadequate staffing as causes of stress among the librarians. Poor motivation among

the librarians is also an issue that has been of concern. This has also been identified as a cause of frustration among the librarians. Onatola(2000) had concluded that motivational impetus for status enhancement in libraries as well as other

organizations is very desirable. He specifically stated that an employee would want to work and remain in a particular employment if he receives the necessary motivation and the work climate assures him of advancement.

Table 6: Effects of Occupational Frustration Variables on the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	%
Absenteeism	159	63
Low productivity	209	83
Lateness to work	103	41
Inability to work fully at work daily	156	62
Low interest/concentration in the assigned duties	79	31
Emotional instability	63	25

The likely impact of these frustration variables were put across to the respondents in order to know whether they happen to them. Every item identified as the effect was responded to in various degrees. Low productivity is the top most as 209 respondents (83%) claim this absenteeism (63%), inability to work fully at work daily (62%) and lateness to work (41%) are the other significant effects. Low interest and lack of concentration on assigned duties (31%) and emotional instability (63%) are the less significant effects reported. See table 6 above.

Summary of Findings

The respondents in this study are librarians working in public universities in the south west Nigeria. They comprised male and female librarians; they are spread across the entire major departments in the academic library; they have varied years of working experience and their job status ranges from assistant librarian to deputy university librarian. The respondents were aware of certain occupational frustration variables and they do experience them. Topmost among these variables are job- related stress, techno- stress, poor motivation, and inadequate infrastructure. These inadequacies have been with the librarians over time as literature had reported them, (Onatola (2000), Odunewu (2005), Harper(2010), Kupersmith (2006), Melchiondea(2007), Akporhonor(2005), and Salam and Onifade(2009)). These frustration variables have impacts on the job performance of the librarians. They are manifested in the form of decline

productivity, absenteeism, lateness to work, and emotional instability, among others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Occupational frustration variables have been with the work environments of librarians in the South West Nigeria. These constraints are having impact on job performance of the librarians in form of decline productivity and absenteeism. However, to alleviate these constraints identified in the academic libraries, or reduce them to the barest level, the following measures are recommended:

1. Stress is harmful to the librarians and their work place. It can cause untold damage to individual’s health and low job performance. However, this can be taken care of by developing positive attitude to work and users; by building good interpersonal relationships, with other personnel in the library; by ignoring or avoiding causes of stress, by sharing problems and issues with colleagues; by engaging in recreational and other physical activities and by taking vacation.
2. Techno stress, another form of stress brought about by application of technology to library and information services can be taken care of or reduced to barest minimum by elimination of issues such as insufficient printers, terminals, work stations, virus attack etc. that can bring about frustration of librarians. These are headaches, back strain, eyestrain, muscular dysfunction etc.; and

- provision of training and orientation to the librarians on information technology. This will allay their fears of job insecurity, and others identified with technology.
3. The management of the institutions and libraries studied should ensure balance in staff/user ratio. There is a standard by the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) on this. The NUC recommends the following: Professional librarians to non-professional should be 1:3; Total library staff to student enrolment should be 1:50 and; professional staff to student enrolment should be 1:200. Efforts should be made to employ more personnel in order to reduce the problem of work overload, and poor staffing reported in the study.
 4. Continuous training and education programmes should be established for the librarians in order to take care of the problem of lack of opportunity for further education identified by the librarians. In order to make this effective, sustainable and less costly, staff development and training divisions can be established in the libraries. If more efforts are devoted to staff training and development, these will lead to self-fulfillment, job satisfaction and improved productivity.
 5. Librarians are academic staff like lecturers and researchers' in Nigeria. They carry out professional and academic duties. Some of them possess doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees. However, the highest level/status librarians can attain by promotion is Principal Librarian (Senior Lecturer equivalent) whereas lecturers and researchers can get to professorial ranks. In order to remove this frustration, librarians with requisite qualifications, publications, and experience should be given opportunity to reach the peak of the academia (professorial ranks)
 6. Furthermore, the number of academic/research publications required for promotion of librarians should not be the same as that of lecturers and researchers. This is because librarians work schedules are fixed; they carry out professional tasks, conduct research and provide user education.
 7. Librarians, not only University Librarians as the practice is in Nigeria presently, should be involved in the Committee System of

- administration in universities. Librarians, in addition to University Librarians, should be made members of important committees and senates of universities. This will enable them to have input into policies, and decisions made on librarians and library personnel. This is to ensure effective communication and effective feedbacks from the management and librarians and vice versa. These measures are recommended to take care of problems associated with participatory management and open communication.
8. There are needs for adequate funding and generous budget for the libraries. Let us bear it in mind that libraries are not revenue-generating institutions that are strategic to the attainment of academic and research excellence. To achieve these, there is need for adequate funding of academic libraries. To achieve this, the university managements and owner government should make relatively adequate funds available to the library. Adequate funding will bring about enough infrastructure, good staffing situation, better opportunity for staff training and further education, and create position for staff advancement.
 9. If all the above measures are put in place, there may be some librarian that would want to play truancy, lack of commitment, and under-perform. Measures should be put in place to check these misbehaviors. Attendance register should be opened and monitored; there should be acceptable standard of productivity for librarians in terms of academic publications, and professional activities and; reward should be given for exceptional performance while under-performance is sanctioned.

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