



Article title: Nigeria women in Library and Information Profession for National Development

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Nigeria women in Library and Information Profession for National Development

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Abstract

This paper examined women in library and information services as a panacea for national development. The study adopted contextual analysis which involved the review of publications on the subject matter from library collections and the Internet. The study seeks to answer the following questions: How has women in library affect national development? How has the women in library information services stimulates national development. The study revealed that, library ensures social inclusion and cohesion by providing access to information and knowledge to all the citizens, library is the only institution capable to shoulder information related responsibility across all strata of the society, by providing and ensuring quality information and services, digital and traditional content, knowledge and information networks and ICT facilities to facilitate life-long learning and communication. Women in Libraries and information services are vibrant social agency that connects people with global information resources and the ideas and creative works they seek. Women in Libraries and information services make available the richness of human expression and cultural diversity in all media. The study recommended the following: To support women inclusion in national development policy, nations must give priority attention to the women contributions to information service provision in their country. This will enable the citizens to make informed and responsible decisions resulting first and foremost to personal development which will culminate into collective or national development. Women in Library information services being critical to national development need to be encouraged at all levels of national, state and local library system.

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Introduction

The question of development is one that has defied all attempts at solution. The concept of development has up to this time ridiculed every effort at a precise and generally acceptable definition. There are volumes of literature on this all-important concept seeking to pin it to a definite connotation but to not avail. It has to be approached in multidimensions and under diverse contexts. In order to make meaning from the term therefore, there must be an adjoining context.

Any effort to view development independently may be counter-productive. While some scholars see development as normative and synonymous with progress, others regard it as multidimensional, involving changes in structures, capacity, and output (Amaoge & Nnandi, 2015). Still others view development in terms of the growth and mastery of the natural environment by man. What most of the societies tagged developed today has some certain things around which such conclusions are arrived at. Mostly such climes mastered technology and information which has improved they security, income, health, happiness and life-span of the citizenry etc. Thus, the development of any society today has come to be measured by its military, socio-economic, political, and technological advancements (Amaoge & Nnandi, 2015). We dream of a world in which people come first. A world where families are safe healthy and free. Economic development is important, but strong economies alone do not guarantee strong societies. If people lack the most basic human necessities, the building blocks to improve their quality of life, a healthy environment and the opportunity to reach their full potential, a society is failing no matter what the economic numbers say (Pritchett, 2021). The Social Progress Index is a new way to define the success of our societies. It is a comprehensive measure of real quality of life, independent of economic indicators (Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock (2016) This debate in rich countries can extend into discussions of development and create a critique that mainstream development has placed too much priority on economic growth and not enough on other dimensions of human well-being (Pritchett, 2021). In development organizations these days one rarely sees the word growth—and never without adjectival modifiers like sustainable and inclusive. Many development agencies have shifted from promoting the larger goal of the four-fold transition of national development to a focus on redistribution and targeted efforts to mitigate the consequences of the lack of development on specific indicators or targeted groups (Pritchett, 2021).

The development debate is largely a confusion of preference and priority and the powerful human tendency to project our immediate concerns onto others: to look in a mirror and describe what we see out a window (Pritchett, 2021). As the years rolls by however, there has been a growing interest in providing more central set of indicators that captured in a more succinct manner all the critical dimensions of development. In this work, the researchers have attempted a measure of national development through women contribution to a certain sector of national life. Specifically, the authors attempt measuring women contribution to library service towards nation development. In this context, development could be viewed as aggregate value of national output. This topic became imperative due to issue of gender and national development in Nigeria.

Okeke and Imaga (2020) contributing on this subject opined that, particularly striking, however, is the fact that rural women, more than their male counterparts, take the lead in agricultural activities, making up to 60-80 percent of labour force. It is ironical that their contributions to agriculture and rural development are seldom noticed. Furthermore, they have either no or minimal part in the decision-making process regarding agricultural development. Gender inequality is therefore dominant in the sector and this constitutes a bottleneck to development, calling for a review of government policies on agriculture to all the elements that place rural women farmers at a disadvantage”. It is on this note that the authors in this article x-rayed the contribution of women in library services for national development in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study include the following

1. How has women contribution in library services measure to national development in Nigeria?
2. How has women contribution library information services stimulating national development in Nigeria?

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this paper is ‘contextual analysis’, which involved the review of publications on the subject matter, from library collections and the Internet.

Conceptual Clarifications

Library

A library has been defined as a collection of sources of information that have been carefully selected and organized for use by library patrons (Mamman & Hundu, 2017). A library is a building that houses and catalogues books, magazines, journals, microfilms, maps, government publications, and other resources. Modern day libraries regardless of type are characterized by collections of electronic information resources such as CD-ROMs, Internet, online databases, video tapes, flash drives, hard disk etc and a chunk of print information resources (Mamman & Hundu, 2017). The publicly-funded library according to IFLA (2003) is one of the most democratic of institutions, serving the needs of the community it serves. As a public space it helps define a sense of that community, providing a safe meeting point. At different points in their lives, people see libraries as a: Place of wide-eyed discovery; Tool for life-long learning; Support for political and social enquiry; Bank of ideas and inspiration; Source of answers to factual questions; Place to acquire new skills; Community center; Local studies resource and a place of sheer pleasure and enjoyment

Information Services

IFLA, (2003) viewed library and information services as key actors in providing unhindered access to essential resources for economic and cultural advancement. In doing so, they contribute effectively to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom, safeguarding

democratic values and universal civil rights (IFLA, 2003). 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). Now, it should be noted that, these library services thought to be provided by mostly women in Nigeria. This view is supported by Bergman, (2005) who opined that, as women continue to make up the management force in increasing numbers, there will be more evidence of this transformation of the image of modern management. However, as women enter the library service delivery in greater numbers and the changes occurring in modern library organizations are conducive to their management styles, it seems that women will further break down the traditional gender divide in librarianship and become increasingly associated with management in the future of libraries.

National Development

National Development in this context refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens through easy access to quality information improving national life. Measures of improvement may be materials, such as an increase in the gross domestic product or social, such as literacy rates and availability of health care (www.ask.com). Mamman and Hundu (2017) Consider national development as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. According to the above authors, this is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the actualization of strategies mapped out by the government. It is a comprehensive measure of real quality of life, independent of economic indicators (Social Progress Imperative, 2021).

Indicators of National Development

In the context of women in library services contribution, components of national development may be the contribution of female librarians to the Nigeria development. Women Librarians according to Philip, Adeboye and Obakemi (2016) have contributed greatly to nation building in this century in various ways. For instance, meeting the information needs of women, girls and Nigerians as a whole is the major contribution of the women in library field to national development. They went further to say that, the special interest group focuses on women as users of library and information services, as workers in the library field and providers of information. The Women, Information and Libraries Special Interest Group's mission is the promotion, development and support of library and information services for the benefit of women, and society as a whole. Empowering women through education is one of the most crucial concerns of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on gender equality. Girl child education has improved greatly lately because women librarians are working in our schools' libraries they concluded.

Women in Library Services and National Development in Nigeria

The contribution of women to national development in many professions including librarianship has been a cause of serious concern in every culture and every climate through the years Falaiye (2004). In the past, particularly in Africa, more emphases were placed on educating the male child than the female child Philip, Adeboye and Obakemi (2016). They further stated that, even when a female child grew up and wanted to take on a job, she was left with limited choices. Typical female jobs included petty trading, subsistence farming and casual labor. These were low paying and low status jobs. Discrimination against women has been a long-standing issue with which society continues to grapple Nwezeh (2009). As soon as you are born a woman, people start limiting your possibilities; regardless of what qualities you display Abiola, (2004). the above submissions, the contributions of women to national development were neglected.

In Nigeria, for instance, many women are observed to be working as professional librarians. Currently, the head of the Nation Library of Nigeria (Chinwe Anunobi) is a woman. This underscores the contribution the women are making through library to the national development in Nigeria and hence the need for scientific investigation. In the multi-cultured society like Nigeria, it is imperative to ascertain the contributions to national issues in order to examine the benefits our diversity and inclusion. Ahiauzu and Echem (2019) further asserts that, over the years, female librarians have gained recognition in their tremendous roles and contributions to nation building through the provision of access to all forms of relevant information to patrons in today's knowledge society. The women among other roles carry out active roles in the area of creating enabling environment for global information networking via the internet, image making of the library and online user education. This has made them gain considerable traction in most libraries all over. These services provided are crucial to the national development of any society. Libraries provide access to the information resources which in turn improve users' quality and speed of decision making. Moreover, Basri et al (2012) argued that library as an institution, is noted for its function as catalyst for human progress and aid in the development and transmission of knowledge and culture and innovation in the society. Also, in a plural society like Nigeria, library ensures social inclusion and cohesion by providing access to information and knowledge to all the citizens.

According to Philip, Adeboye and Obakemi (2016), as women continue to enter management roles in librarianship in greater numbers, slowly bridging the traditional gender divide that has plagued the profession over the last century, there are evidence to indicate the potential emergence of a new gender divide. This new gender divide that threatens to emerge is unique to the 21st century and is a product of the increasing role of technology in the profession and the

struggle to redefine the profession to remain relevant in the growing information industry. Quoting Grotzinger the authors later concluded that, the dearth of writing about women librarians is recognition denied and removes the evidence that would permit a solid assessment of their roles and contributions.

With the concept of national development in focus, library therefore plays an important role as providers access points to information in the efforts to bridge the gap between the information rich and poor (Owoeye and Abolarinwa (2016). Women according to Barrington, (1993) form the backbone of library and information services. In line with this, it can be safely argued that, the development of Nigeria and her economy is also dependent on the increasing contributions and roles women librarians provides to information users because national development is very much influenced by the amount and quality of available information. In the midst of information society era, library facilitates both local and international information networking and knowledge sharing through digitization and virtualization of access to local and external content (Owoeye and Abolarinwa (2016).

In this information age, citizens must be able to find and use information to meet their needs. Information is the key raw material but with no value if access to it is problematic. Basri et. al (2012) indicated that there is no other institution that carries out this long-term, systematic work except library. Information is closely related to culture in a way that information yields knowledge which then contributes to people's creative power. This creative results in inventions that improve human security and health. In this wise, it will be more benefiting if the public can be offered access to knowledge and cultural treasures in the custody of library. This significant role of library has a concomitant effect on national development in Nigeria (Mamman and Hundu 2017).

According to Owoeye and Abolarinwa (2016), in a society in which the quality of life as well as prospects for social change and economic development, depends largely upon information and its exploitation, the living standards, patterns of work and leisure, the education system and the market place are influenced markedly by advances in information and knowledge. Knowledge based activity particularly economy is critical mass of knowledge workers, innovative and competitive service sectors, knowledge induced poverty reduction, high value-added information intensive commerce, high technology industries and inclusive participation in economic activities Owoeye and Abolarinwa (2016). In the light of this, library is the only institution capable to shoulder information related responsibility, by proving and ensuring quality information and services, digital and traditional content, knowledge and information networks and ICT facilities to facilitate life-long learning and communication. This will in turn nurture and acculturate the availability of diverse knowledge sources, foster free access to government information, encourage freedom of expression, tolerance of opposing political and public views, availability of diverse communication channels and defense of human rights (Owoeye and Abolarinwa 2016).

Recommendation

Based on the discussion in the paper the following recommendations are proffered: To enhance national development, nations must give priority attention to the women stake in information service provision to her citizens. This will enable the citizens to make informed and responsible decisions resulting first and foremost to personal development which will culminate into collective or national development. Library information services being critical to national development need to be promoted at all levels of national life

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to show the relevance of women in library services for enhancing national development in Nigeria. The paper attempted to conceptualize national development. It

revealed that there are linkages between national development and the contribution of women through library service provision; and that for national development to be more realistic in Nigeria all Nigerians must beware of their information needs and develop the hunger to use information for personal development which will culminate into collective/national development The paper also disclosed the indispensable role of women in libraries in providing the necessary information that would empower citizens which will ensure national development in Nigeria.

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