

Academic Librarians' Perception of Knowledge Sharing in Nigerian University Libraries

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: The paper investigated Academic Librarians' perception in the Southern Nigeria to knowledge sharing with a view to understand their notions and provide solutions.

Methodology: The research is qualitative and descriptive survey. The research design was adopted using total enumeration technique to administer copies of a self-developed and structured questionnaire to obtain data from a 83 sample size drawn from the 137 available population of study. Retrieved copies were screened to expunge the invalid ones. Usable copies were analysed with Statistical Package for Social Science version 25 and interpreted with Pearson Product Moment Correlation, percentage, mean score and standard deviation. The study is guided by four objectives.

Findings: Perception of Academic Librarians in the Southern Nigeria to knowledge sharing was found to be significantly positive, with a weighted mean = 3.55 on a scale of 4. The study further established that they used the traditional media more than the social media for sharing knowledge and their level of ICT skills and ICT tools for sharing knowledge were both found to be high.

Recommendations: Both social media and traditional platforms should be fortified for knowledge sharing purposes and additional efforts should be placed on making more use of the social media platforms because of the enormous benefits attached to it for sharing knowledge as against the traditional methods.

By extension, sharing of knowledge in University Libraries should be a continuous activity to strengthen best practices in librarianship.

Keywords: Knowledge Sharing, ICT, Information Age, Social Media, Traditional Communication Media, Nigerian University Libraries

Introduction

The changing world is a phenomenon that is being characterised by the information age, and synonyms such as information society, digital age, knowledge and economy are often being used inter-changeably in literature. With the emergence of the information, it appears that the world seems to have reached its final standpoint, whereby information has been regarded not only as prerequisite to every success story but also as the fifth factor of production to the previously known four factors of production: land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship (Enachi, 2009). The concept of information as a major component of knowledge as the fifth factor of production has now gained more value as a result of engaging information by an entrepreneurial to source for and coordinate land, labour and capital. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that it will be highly unthinkable for any individual, organisation or government to succeed without information.

The advent of internet accessibility has greatly empowered the proliferation of information and which

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in turn overtly gave birth to a paradigm shift in all works of life of a phrase known as knowledge management initiative (Castells, 2019). Extant literature revealed that the notion started in the management sciences before it eventually cut across all disciplines on the premises that all disciplines need information to survive. Knowledge management is a construct that encompasses four major tenets, vis-à-vis knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, knowledge utilisation and knowledge storage (Panda, 2022). Among these four doctrine of knowledge sharing, knowledge sharing is the most crucial one that is being constantly favoured by researchers in terms of investigating it from various approaches such as respondents' perception of it, its practices in the workplace, its contribution to productivity, its influence on other constructs (Ismail Al-Alawi et al., 2007). Therefore, there is abundant literature on knowledge sharing and this present one is inevitably adding to the existing literature on knowledge sharing.

Literature Review

Knowledge Sharing in the Changing World

The changing world is one that is being characterised with information in which information remains a commodity that cannot be substituted with any other item. Thus, the changing world is an information society in which the main product is information. The phrase, information society has been defined by Keenan and Johnson (2000) as one in which "most workers depends on the flow of information in order to perform their jobs". However, as good as this definition appears to be, it is not comprehensive enough as it fails to acknowledge the fact "everyone" and "not most workers" needs information to succeed. In other words, information is like air and food that every human being needs to survive but it has taken the world so long to arrive at this fact. In the words of Greer, Grover and Flower (2007) information that is processed, selected and synthesised by human being becomes knowledge and knowledge that is processed by groups of people in turn becomes social knowledge. Knowledge becomes more useful when is being shared, utilised and continuous being circulated in the society.

The emergence of information explosion triggered the call for knowledge to be properly managed like other resources such as land and capital. The concept of

knowledge management hitherto brings about the notion of knowledge sharing to propagate the value of knowledge and thereby promoting it as universal currency that has come to dominate the global development. Knowledge sharing has not only empowered the creation of wealth in the knowledge economy but it has also empowered both individual and organizations the opportunity to manage wealth that had been created successfully. From the doctrine of knowledge management initiative, knowledge sharing is the most significant element because its being active guarantees the existence of knowledge creation, knowledge utilisation and knowledge storage.

Extant literature such as the works of Babalhavaeji and Kermani (2011) cited by Adewuyi and Rasaki (2022) opined that knowledge sharing strives where there is trust among employees in the workplace just like the work. Egunjobi et al. (2021) investigated factors affecting knowledge sharing practices among personnel in private university libraries in Osun State, Nigeria and confirmed that organisational commitment, staff motivations/welfare and leadership/management style adopted by the studied libraries were the three factors influencing knowledge practices among the staff while fear of stealing one's idea, unwillingness to share, fear of other employees taking credit for one's idea and lack of trust among staff were the major individual factors hindering knowledge sharing practices in the studied libraries. In another study by Adewuyi and Rasaki (2022) in their study of relationship trust, motivation and knowledge sharing among personnel of selected university libraries in two geopolitical zones in Nigeria negates this fact as their report indicated that trust and motivation do not influence knowledge sharing among the personnel of the studied libraries in the North-Central and South-South zones of Nigeria. Shahid and Naveed (2020) carried out a study on knowledge sharing behaviour of academicians in Pakistan and discovered that there were no significant difference in the index of knowledge sharing of the respondents based on gender, social background, education and teaching experience, but age and number of publication were found to have correlatives with knowledge sharing behaviour of academicians in Pakistan. Emphasising the importance of knowledge sharing in the workplace, Egberongbe and Adewuyi (2021) opined that knowledge sharing is a tool that can be used to increase productivity, team work and decision-making as well as promoting researches in the academia.

Methods of Sharing Knowledge

Knowledge can be shared through so many channels in the workplace which may include sharing knowledge during staff meetings, seminar presentation and casual discussion. Staff meeting whether physical or virtual enables individual to express his or her opinion and thereby directly and indirectly sharing his or her tacit knowledge with others. Other means by which knowledge can be shared in the workplace is through mentoring or what can be referred to as on-the-job training and documentation of organisational activities such as minutes of meetings, documentation of seminar papers and workshops. All these methods are obtainable in libraries and other workplaces. For instance, Islam et al. (2020) studied knowledge sharing through mobile phone to develop a knowledge base on rural women in Bangladesh and reported that the respondents shared knowledge through mobile phone because it is cheaper, easier and available medium for communication. However, the non-educated women share their indigenous experiences. Similarly, Diyaolu and Owunezi (2020) carried out a study on knowledge sharing for knowledge retention and growth among LIS educators in Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Ebonyi State and stated that all the respondents appreciate importance of knowledge sharing as they share knowledge during departmental meetings, seminars, workshops, interpersonal interaction and also encourage their students to be sharing knowledge among themselves.

Benefits of Knowledge Sharing in Libraries

Benefits of knowledge sharing cannot be over-emphasised. One of the major purposes of knowledge management is the preservation of organisational knowledge such as best practices in the library in the areas of book selection, acquisition, cataloguing and classification of information resources. Book selection, acquisition, cataloguing and classification are purely technical services that must be learned through mentoring vis-a-vis on the job training. On-the-job-training is a process by which the older staff passes skills to the younger staff. Therefore where there is proper on-the-job-training, knowledge sharing excels to strengthen best practices, preserve skills and

enhances succession plan. Other benefits of knowledge sharing in the workplace are the possibility of strengthen socialisation among employees, increase job productivity and effective job delivery. Specifically, knowledge sharing stands to enhance robust research collaboration among academic librarians and thereby enhances research productivity. For instance, David-West (2021) opined that it is important for academic libraries to determine who knows what and how that knowledge can be shared. This will probably be a mechanism to retain and convert individual tacit knowledge to organisational knowledge and this will improve organisational productivity and thereby reducing deficiency in job performance such as lack of professional skills and competent staff to catalogue and classify information resources which Adewuyi (2016) identified as some of the problems resulting to backlog of unprocessed books in Nigerian libraries.

Statement of the Problem

Extant literature had established numerous benefits of knowledge sharing both to individual and to library as organisation. However, not many works seems to have been done on factors that constitute to employees' knowledge sharing, prerequisite skills needed and more importantly, employees' perception to knowledge sharing within and outside the workplace. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to find out perception of academic librarians in the Southern Nigeria to knowledge sharing, existing platforms for sharing knowledge and level of their information communication technology skills. It is hoped that results of this research will add to the literature in librarianship on knowledge management.

Objectives of the Study

- To find out employees' perception on knowledge sharing in the studied libraries.
- To find out existing platforms for knowledge sharing in the studied libraries.
- To find out employees' level of ICT skills in the studied libraries.
- To find out available ICT facilities in the studied libraries for sharing knowledge.

Methodology

The research is quantitative and the research design employed for this study was a descriptive survey. Population of study consists of the 137 academic librarians available in the studied libraries as at the time of this study and total elimination technique was used to administer the instrument of research on the 83 sample size on equal allocation of 20 copies each in each of the selected university libraries. Administration of copies of the questionnaire was done personally by the researchers and in conjunction with contact persons in the selected studied libraries. The study is limited to Southern part of

Nigerian whereby two geo-political zones were selected out of the three geo-political zones in the Southern Nigeria. Two states were selected out of the six states in the South-West, Nigeria while two states were equally selected from the existing five states in the South-South, Nigeria. Four federal university libraries and four state university libraries were chosen from the selected four states for the study, making eight university libraries altogether used for the study as reflected in Table 1. Copies of the usable questionnaire were analysed using computer soft called Statistical Package for Social Science version 25 and interpreted with percentage, mean score and standard deviation.

Table 1: Showing Distribution of Questionnaire Administered and Retrieved

Sr. No.	Institutions	Number of Academic Librarians	Administered Copies of Questionnaire	Retrieved Copies and Percentage
South-West				
1	Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria	20	12	10
2	Sola Akinrinade Library, Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria	13	12	8
3	University of Lagos Library, University of Lagos, Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria	16	12	10
4	Fatiu Ademola Akesode Library, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria	18	12	9
South-South				
5	University Library, Niger Delta University, Amasoma, Bayelsa State, Nigeria	17	12	9
6	University of Calabar Library, Cross River State, Nigeria	40	12	10
7	Akwa Ibom State University Library, Ikot Akpaden, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria	8	7	6
8	University Library, University of Cross River State, Nigeria	5	5	5
Total		137	83	67 (80.72%)

Table 1 shows copies of administered questionnaire and retrieved. Equal allocation of copies were administered except the state university libraries having limited of academic librarians that are not up to twelve in number and so total elimination was used to administered question in those two university libraries. At the end of the administration, 67 copies were retrieved from the 83 copies that were administered. The retrieval success is

80.72%. After screening, 4 copies were found not useable and the result of the analysis is based on the 63 copies of the questionnaire that were found usable.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Objective One: To find out employees' perception on knowledge sharing in the studied libraries.

Table 2: Academic Librarians' Perception of Knowledge Sharing in Selected Southern Nigeria University Libraries

Sr. No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	S.D.
1	Knowledge sharing makes research collaboration possible	46 (73.0%)	15 (23.8%)	-	2 (3.2%)	3.67	0.648
2	Knowledge sharing improves organizational workflow	39 (61.9%)	23 (36.5%)	-	1 (1.6%)	3.59	0.586
3	Knowledge sharing improves research productivity in the workplace	38 (60.3%)	23 (36.5%)	2 (3.2%)	-	3.57	0.560
4	Knowledge sharing empowers individual to be more knowledgeable	39 (61.9%)	21 (33.3%)	2 (3.2%)	1 (1.6%)	3.56	0.642
6	Knowledge sharing makes achievement of organizational set-goals possible	38 (60.3%)	22 (34.9%)	1 (1.6%)	2 (3.2%)	3.52	0.692
7	Knowledge sharing makes organizational problem solving possible	38 (60.3%)	20 (31.7%)	2 (3.2%)	3 (4.8%)	3.48	0.780
8	Knowledge sharing improves communication system	34 (54.0%)	25 (39.7%)	3 (4.8%)	1 (1.6%)	3.46	0.668
Weighted Mean=3.55							

Table 2 showed the knowledge sharing perception in the workplace. "Knowledge sharing makes research collaboration possible" (\bar{x} =3.67) was ranked highest by the mean score rating as the benefits of knowledge sharing, and was followed in succession by "Knowledge sharing improves organizational workflow" (\bar{x} =3.59), "Knowledge sharing improves research productivity in the workplace" (\bar{x} =3.57), "Knowledge sharing empowers individual to be more knowledgeable" (\bar{x} =3.56), "Knowledge sharing enhances personal problem solving" (\bar{x} =3.52), "Knowledge sharing makes achievement of organizational set-goals possible" (\bar{x} =3.52), "Knowledge

sharing makes organizational problem solving possible" (\bar{x} =3.48), and lastly by "Knowledge sharing improves communication system" (\bar{x} =3.46), respectively. In all, the reported perception of academic librarians in knowledge sharing were found to be high with the weighted mean = 3.55 on a scale of 4. This implied academic librarians in the studied university libraries appreciated the importance and enormous benefits of knowledge sharing as catalyst to research collaboration, job productivity, personal and organisational development.

Objective Two: To find out existing platforms for knowledge sharing in the studied libraries.

Table 3: Mostly Used Platforms for Knowledge Sharing among Academic Librarians in the Selected University Libraries in Southern Nigeria

Sr. No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	S.D.
Social media platform (Weighted Mean=3.12)							
1	WhatsApp	52 82.5%	7 11.1%	2 3.2%	2 3.2%	3.73	0.68
2	Facebook	33 52.4%	19 30.2%	5 7.9%	6 9.5%	3.25	0.97
3	Instagram	29 46.0%	16 25.4%	13 20.6%	5 7.9%	3.10	0.99
5	Twitter	28 44.4%	18 28.6%	11 17.5%	6 9.5%	3.08	1.01

Sr. No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	S.D.
4	Pinterest	26 41.3%	9 14.3%	21 33.3%	7 11.1%	2.86	1.10
6	Tumblr	21 33.3%	15 23.8%	16 25.4%	11 17.5%	2.73	1.11
Traditional platform (Weighted Mean=3.50)							
1	During staff meetings	41 65.1%	18 28.6%	2 3.2%	2 3.2%	3.56	0.71
2	Face to face (verbal communication)	41 65.1%	18 28.6%	2 3.2%	2 3.2%	3.56	0.71
3	Documented organizational activities	42 66.7%	16 25.4%	2 3.2%	3 4.8%	3.54	0.78
4	Through seminar presentation	39 61.9%	19 30.2%	2 3.2%	3 4.8%	3.49	0.78
5	Printed organizational newsletter	36 57.1%	17 27.0%	7 11.1%	3 4.8%	3.37	0.88
Overall Weighted Mean=3.30							

Table 3 showed the mostly used platform for knowledge sharing in Nigerian University libraries and social media platform such as WhatsApp having the means score of $X=3.37$, $SD=0.68$, Facebook with the mean score of $X=3.25$, $SD=0.97$, Instagram having the means score of $X=3.10$, $SD=0.99$ for sharing knowledge was seen as having a lower weighted mean = 3.12 as against the use of traditional platform such as “during meetings” with the means score of $X=3.56$, $SD=0.71$, face to face (verbal communication) with the means score of $X=3.56$, $SD=0.71$, documented organisational activities with the means score of $X=3.54$, $SD=0.78$, through seminar presentation which the means score of $X=3.49$, $SD=0.78$ and printed organisational newsletter with the means

score of $X=3.37$, $SD=0.88$, for sharing knowledge which has weighted mean = 3.50. This indicates that respondents engage the traditional platform for sharing knowledge more than the social media platform and this could be as a result of several factors such as financial constraints, allergic to ICT usage. However, with the overall weighted mean = 3.30 of both social media and traditional platforms for sharing knowledge on a scale of 4, it can be concluded that available platforms for sharing knowledge in the studied university libraries is very high as at the time of this study.

Objective Three: To find out employees' level of ICT skills in the studied libraries.

Table 4: Level of ICT Skills of Academic Librarians in the Selected University Libraries in Southern Nigeria

Sr. No.	Statement	Very High	High	Average	Low	\bar{x}	S.D.
1	Internet browsing	44 (69.8%)	18 28.6%	1 (1.6%)	-	3.68	0.502
2	E-mail usage	44 (69.8%)	16 25.4%	2 (3.2%)	1 (1.6%)	3.63	0.630
3	Typing and printing of documents skills	41 (65.1%)	16 25.4%	5 (7.9%)	1 (1.6%)	3.54	0.714
4	Knowledge usage of Microsoft Word	40 (63.5%)	16 (25.4%)	4 (6.3%)	3 (4.8%)	3.48	0.820
5	Knowledge usage of Microsoft PowerPoint	34 (54.0%)	21 (33.3%)	5 (7.9%)	3 (4.8%)	3.37	0.829

Sr. No.	Statement	Very High	High	Average	Low	\bar{x}	S.D.
6	Knowledge usage of various electronic storage devices	35 (55.6%)	23 (36.5%)	3 (4.8%)	2 (3.2%)	3.44	0.736
7	Downloading and uploading of documents	35 (55.6%)	24 (38.1%)	2 (3.2%)	2 (3.2%)	3.46	0.714
8	Usage of Microsoft Excels	31 (49.2%)	17 (27.0%)	10 (15.9%)	5 (7.9%)	3.17	0.976
Weighted Mean=3.47							

Table 4 showed the level of ICT skills among Librarians in Nigerian University Library. It was discovered that majority 44 (69.8%) of the respondents had very high skills in internet browsing and email usage, respectively. While 41 (65.1%) of them acknowledged of having skills in typing and printing of document skill and this was further confirmed with the revelation of 40 (63.5%) of the respondents indicated that they have advanced knowledge usage of Microsoft Word usage. This will to a very large extent boost knowledge sharing practices among the academic librarians. Other ICT skills fostering knowledge sharing among the academic librarians are knowledge usage of Microsoft PowerPoint (X=3.37,

SD=0.83), knowledge usage of various electronic storage devices (X=3.44, SD=0.74), downloading and uploading of document (X=3.46, SD=0.71) and knowledge usage of Microsoft Excels (X=3.17, SD=0.98) with this discovery, it can be deduced knowledge usage of Microsoft office assistant such as PowerPoint and Excel are poor compared to Microsoft Words that used regularly on a daily basis. However, with the overall reported weighted mean=3.55 on a scale of 4 it can be concluded that academic librarians' ICT skills in the studied libraries for knowledge sharing is a very high.

Objective Four: To find out available ICT facilities in the studied libraries for sharing knowledge.

Table 5: Available ICT Tools in the Selected University Libraries in Southern Nigeria

Sr. No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	S.D.
1	Desktops computer sets	46 (73.0%)	15 (23.8%)	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	3.68	0.59
2	Availability of organizational free Wi-Fi for internet connectivity	40 (63.5%)	16 (25.4%)	4 (6.3%)	3 (4.8%)	3.48	0.82
3	Internet connectivity	39 (61.9%)	21 (33.3%)	1 (1.6%)	2 (3.2%)	3.54	0.69
4	Printers	36 (57.1%)	17 (27.0%)	9 (14.3%)	1 (1.6%)	3.40	0.79
5	Commercial photocopy machine	35 (55.6%)	18 (28.6%)	6 (9.5%)	4 (6.3%)	3.33	0.90
6	Laptops	35 (55.6%)	14 (22.2%)	11 (17.5%)	3 (4.8%)	3.29	0.92
7	Official photocopy machine	32 (50.8%)	18 (28.6%)	9 (14.3%)	4 (6.3%)	3.24	0.93
Weighted Mean=3.42							

Table 5 showed the available ICT tools in the studied libraries. The study revealed that majority 46 (73.0%) of the respondents having the mean score of X=3.68,

SD=0.59 acknowledged that desktops computer sets were available in the libraries to facilitate knowledge sharing and this is followed with 40 (63.5%) of them with the

mean score of $X=3.48$, $SD=0.82$ stated that they have organizational Wi-Fi facility to hence internet connectivity and this was further collaborated by 39 (61.9%) of the respondents with the means score of $X=3.54$, $SD=0.69$ acknowledging availability of internet connectivity in their libraries. Other available ICT facilities in the studied libraries for powering knowledge sharing are printers ($X=3.40$, $SD=0.79$), commercial photocopy machines ($X=3.33$, $SD=0.90$), Official laptops ($X=3.29$, $SD=0.92$) and official photocopy machine which was rated low with the mean score of $X=3.24$, $SD=0.93$. With this revelation, it means commercial photocopy machines had been put in place in the studied libraries to complement both staff and library clientele needs. In all, the reported available ICT tools in the studied libraries were found to be high with the weighted mean = 3.42 on a scale of 4.

Summary of Findings

This paper examined perception of academic librarians in the selected university libraries in Southern Nigeria on knowledge vis-à-vis their information communication technology skills as well as the available platforms for sharing knowledge in the studied libraries. It was discovered that majority of the respondents that responded to the questionnaire were in their early stage of service that ranged between 5 and 10 years compared to the senior colleagues who have recorded more working experience between 11 and above 25 years of work experience.

The respondents have strong positive perception about knowledge sharing with the weighted mean = 3.55 on a scale of 4. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Adekunmisi and Awojobi (2010) who in their study of perception of information and communication technology use on students' academic performance by lecturers in College of Agriculture Sciences of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State confirmed that the respondents were well disposed to knowledge sharing. Also, mostly used platforms for sharing knowledge, respondents' level of ICT skills as well as available ICT tools were all found to be high as at the time of this study. Even though the overall weighted mean of 3.30 of mostly platforms for knowledge sharing was high but traditional platforms for knowledge sharing recorded higher weighted mean of 3.50 above social media platforms which recorded a weighted mean of 3.12. This probably implied that social

interactions among academic librarians in the studied libraries were strong.

However, with the overall reported weighted mean of 3.30 on a scale of 4 of mostly used platforms for knowledge sharing indicated that academic librarian in the Southern Nigeria were actively sharing knowledge using the available platforms. This finding was in agreement with the discovery of Diyaolu and Owunze (2020) who in their study of knowledge sharing among LIS educators reported a positive notion that the respondent about knowledge sharing. On the employees' ICT skills, it was discovered that there was a positive influence of academic librarians' skills to their perception of knowledge sharing. This finding was also in agreement with the finding of Islam et al. (2020) who in their study of knowledge sharing among rural women in Bangladesh confirmed that the educated ones among the respondents possessed relevant skills in using mobile phone to share knowledge while the non-educated among them share their indigenous experiences orally. However, the study revealed that years of work experience did not influence knowledge sharing perception of the academic librarians in the studied libraries. This implied that perception on knowledge sharing does not depend on years of work experience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Knowledge sharing remains a beneficiary factor for the emancipation of effective performance and protection of organisation knowledge for each successive generation in every organisation including libraries of tertiary institution of learning. It is a way of preserving the tradition in the place of work. Based on the findings from the study, the paper recommended that:

Both social media and traditional platforms should be fortified for knowledge sharing purposes in libraries.

Additional efforts should be placed on making more use of the social media platforms because of the enormous benefits attached to it for sharing knowledge as against the traditional methods.

By extension, sharing of knowledge in University Libraries should be a continuous activity to strengthen best practices in librarianship.

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Authors' Note

This paper was extracted from a paper presented at the 61st National Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Library Association from 2nd - 7th July, 2023 held at the International Culture & Event Centre, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria.