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Review

Women Librarians in Nigeria: Status, Characteristics and Contribution to Development

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Objective – This review of literature provides a framework for understanding the profession of Librarianship. It also focuses on status and characteristics of women librarians in Nigeria and their contribution to national development. **Methods** – Databases from the disciplines of Library Science and Business and Management, including the larger Social Sciences, were searched for. References to sources that dealt with the status and characteristics of female librarians in Nigeria and worldwide were consulted. Databases were also searched for sources relating to Librarianship and gender practices. Sources were also culled from major bibliographies on women in libraries. Articles and monographs were selected for inclusion in the review if they reported research findings related to these broad topics. Sources from professional literature were included if they offered a unique perspective on live experiences of women librarians. **Results** – Findings show the number of women in senior leadership roles has increased over the years. Nigeria has many Library and Information Science Schools. They have Bachelor of Library and information Science and degrees at postgraduate levels. Many women librarians have acquired postgraduate degrees in Librarianship. This has made their employment into high positions possible and easy regardless of their female gender. **Conclusions:** A review of the literature regarding status, characteristics and contribution of women librarians in Nigeria revealed that women have contributed to national development in various ways. It also revealed that gender inequality between women Librarian have drastically reduced because of education of women, because both male and female librarians are being taught with the same academic curriculum.

Keywords: Librarianship, Women, Librarians, Characteristics, Leadership, Positions, Status

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE TOPIC

Since the last two and a half decades and most especially from the 1980s, there has been massive campaign for women's development in the social, economic and political

sectors of Nigeria. This has not only uplifted women's lives and made them active participants in those sectors, but has also made Nigeria a role model for women's development in other African countries Badawi, (2006). 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

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start limiting your possibilities; regardless of what qualities you display Abiola, (2004). It is therefore not in disputing that from the beginning of civilization, women have suffered subjugation, degradation, oppression and all forms of inhuman treatment on account of their gender Nwezeh, (2009). This is especially so in Africa where gender roles are distinct. The women are occupied with domestic responsibilities, which typically involve household chores and caring for the home Majanja and Kiplang'at, (2003). The status of women, including the different professions, 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 emphasis was placed on educating the male child than the female child. 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 causal labor. These were low paying and low status jobs.

In the past 20 years, in particular, there has been a shift away from looking at gender inequality as an issue that affects women only, occasioned by an understanding of the nature of power as gender and its implications for society as a whole (International Idea, 2000). It is common therefore to find women all over the world in different professions and at different levels competing with their male counterparts. The Nigerian constitution, (1999) emphasized on equal position and opportunities for men and women. By this, women acquire the same training alongside the opposite sex (male) thus laying background for same experience in leadership. Women form the backbone of library and information services Barrington, (1993). In line with this, this review journal will be on women librarians in Nigeria status, characteristics and development.

Librarianship Professionalism in Nigeria

According to Aguolu, (1986) the essential of a profession include the possession of a specialized body of knowledge and skills acquired during a prolonged period of education and training existence of an effective professional association which defines admission into the profession and training requirements, licensing and other formal requirement and career lines within the profession with autonomy or discretion of numbers to take final decisions in their areas of competence , a code of ethics , regulation of relations of professionals with their clients and colleagues, service orientation and assurance of public or societal recognition. It was in the 19th century that Librarians emerged as a professional group in USA. In 1876, the American Library Association (ALA) was formed followed by formation of Library Association of England in 1878 which was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1898.

The library profession in Nigeria can be traced back to the Nigerian pre-colonial era. In 1900, the Justice Ministry Library was established in Lagos out of the need for bibliographical control of growing colonial legal documents. The only library then was the European Community or Club Library whose membership was restricted to the Europeans except for non-Europeans who could afford a registration fee of one guinea per adult. This prohibitive cost led to consultations with the colonial government and Lagos Town Council about the possibility of setting up a new library for Lagos. In 1948, the British Council opened the Lagos Municipal Library (L.M.C.). After three years of joint management, the British Council handed over the library to the Lagos Municipal Council in 1952.

John Harris, (1970) states that between 1949 and 1950, the new profession of librarianship was born in Nigeria and its christening was in 1953. The UNESCO Seminar on Public Library Development in Africa was held at Ibadan, Nigeria in 1953. This seminar gave birth to the formation of the West African Library Association, comprising Anglophone countries of West Africa. With the attainment of independence by Ghana and Nigeria from Britain in 1957 and 1960 respectively, the Ghana Library Association and the Nigerian Library Association were formed respectively. The birth of these two National Associations led to the dissolution of the West African Library Association in 1961 Nwezeh, (2009).

Literature Review on Status, Characteristics of Female Librarians in Nigeria and Contribution to Development

The issue of professionalism has always focused on both expected competencies as well as profile of personal attributes, personalities and characteristics. According to Ifidon, (2012) building a success profile of the library and information science professional of the 21st century to suit the global market is essential to determine a framework for what capabilities, skills and behaviors are needed to nurture, encourage and consolidate for multiplication effect. This will enable Library and Information Science professional to deliver the expected goods and services.

A woman Librarian is a female professional who has acquired competency in applying theory and technology to the creation, selection, organization and utilization of collection in all formats. She can also be seen as one who manages and mediates access to information that exists only in electronic format.

Today's libraries are transforming from traditional bureaucratic hierarchies into flatter, more participatory and team-based organizations in response to the need for more flexibility to keep up with rapidly changing environments Stueart & Moran, (2007). As women continue to make up the management force in increasing numbers, there will be more evidence of this transformation of the image of

In Nigeria Library Association(NLA). Council members as of

NLA COUNCIL		
MEMBERS	MALES	FEMALES
76	54	22
EXCO; 5	2	3

Source: NLA Council minutes 2012.

Membership of NLA

	MEMBERSHIP	MALES	FEMALES
a.	202	96	106
b.	313	189	124

Source: (a) AGM 1 minutes of 2012, 16th July (b) AGM 11 minutes of 2012, 18th July

modern management. However, as women enter the sphere in greater numbers and the changes occurring in modern 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. Women continue to make headway into management positions in the LIS profession in increasing numbers Bergman, (2005). That woman finally occupied over 50 percent of directorships at large Research Libraries and universities Libraries, and that they were also often earning higher salaries than their male counterparts. Deyrup,(2004).

Traditionally, the Nigeria female was prepared for family life and the male for career life. This created a glass ceiling for the female folks especially in professional practice. The present day Nigeria woman is receiving great recognition. Udofia, (2011). In Nigeria of late, the inclusion of women in governance at all sphere of life is giving a new awareness and ambition to women.

Women Librarians in Nigeria have risen so high both in numbers and in position we have many female university librarians, the present Registrar/CEO of Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria(LRCN) is a woman in person of DR.Mrs. Victoria Okojie.

Nigeria has many Library and Information Science Schools, while some of the schools offer Bachelor of Library Science (BLS); others offer degrees at the postgraduate level Aguolu, (1986). Particularly in academic libraries in Nigeria, it is not an overstatement to say that the Heads of Libraries prefer to hire staff that have

librarianship as a postgraduate course rather than a straight first degree, irrespective of their gender Falaiye,(2004).

Ononogbo and Falaiye (1992) examined the curriculum for library science education in the New Nigerian Standards. They compared the curriculum to a standard curriculum recommended by the International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA). There was no gender difference because everything about the curriculum applies to both sexes (all students). There are universities like University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello University, Bayero University, Imo State University, Delta State University, University of Maiduguri, among others, offering courses in Librarianship and some degrees up to the doctoral level.

In the first comprehensive career study of librarians for ALA's Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship, Heim and Estabrook (1983) found that 78.3 percent of ALA's members were female and 21.7 percent were male. Almost half of men (49.6 percent) could be categorized as administrators, while 30.4 percent of women occupied similar positions Heim & Estabrook, (1983). Further, the study found that twice as many men were elected or were appointed to office or chair of a committee at the national association level Heim & Estabrook, (1983). Most importantly, the study found that "being male is significantly associated with receiving a higher salary even when personal, professional, and organizational variables are comparable to those of females in the sample" Heim & Estabrook, (S1983).

Ogunrombi, Pisagih, and Udoh, (2002) examined the contribution of female librarians to library development in Nigeria from 1960 to 2000. Their study revealed that only few female librarians were included and cited Nigerian biographical works. Their study also showed that the status and role of women librarians in Nigeria was marked by an "explicit pattern of discrimination." It further states that the main barrier appeared to be due to domestic responsibilities. Jones and Goulding, (1999) write that women form the backbone of library and information services. They numerically dominate the profession to the extent that 75% of librarians are women. However, only 9% of women, compared with 20% of men, earn over £27,000 (Poland, 1996). Despite the image of librarianship as a female profession, women are not prominently represented at the higher levels of management. Explanations offered for this state of affairs is numerous and varied, such as inadequate child-care facilities, career interruptions, male work cultures and discriminatory attitudes in the workplace. The library profession in the United Kingdom and United States of America is regarded first and foremost, as a "lady" profession while in Nigeria the Librarian is mainly a "he" Falaiye, (2004). Research indicates that women have made significant, though not complete, progress in bridging this gender divide in librarianship in recent years.

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 is some 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. The use of ICT in the libraries as increase tremendously and this has contributed to social development.

Examining the writing and research over this time period provides evidence that women's administrative and leadership abilities were often recognized, but given greatest credence under specific circumstances. Career advancement for women, who were the majority in libraries, was bounded by the size of the responsibilities, usually also determined by the size of the institution, by job mobility, and by years of education and experience. It was the natural order for men to be heads of academic libraries, particularly major research libraries, and the male minority presumably advanced the careers of other men.

Wong and Zubatsky, (1983), who studied the demographic and professional characteristics of first-time appointed college and university library directors between the years 1970 to 1980, found women were most often appointed at smaller institutions. Since they tended to be unmarried, it was presumed they were more mobile.

Writing about women's lives, the female experience, has received a lot of attention from scholars over the past quarter century. Seminal works by Heilbrun, (1988) and Bateson (1990) discussed the discordance between the published or public life and the private lives of women, and how most women have not written openly about themselves or their accomplishments. Similarly, biographies often describe women's lives in ways that are not based on female truth or experiences, but contrive to be in keeping with the societal norms of the day.

Works that describe women's lives as librarians can be found in the professional literature. Many of these are biographies, interviews or brief descriptions of women's professional lives that were compiled so that names and achievements would not be lost once the memory of an individual or an institution had faded. Grotzinger, (1983) examined a number of biographical studies of librarians to find that biographies of male librarians far outnumber the biographies of female librarians. She concluded that this dearth of writing about women librarians is recognition denied and "removes the evidence that would permit a solid assessment of their roles and contributions". This evidence is critical to decide whether their contribution was notable, and if women can be determined to be leaders in their times. Grotzinger, (1983) also maintained that one of the perils of biographical studies of women librarians is the lack of apparent methodological rigor and critical analysis, as a great many of these biographical works fall into the classification of non-scholarly tributes. She examined these works as well as theses, dissertations, and collective scholarly biographies, and concluded there are a number of critical flaws in biographical works about women, some of them due to lack of primary source materials and failure to cite sources.

As Maack, (2002) noted, historical and biographical works make up a large part of the entries and "we now have bibliographic access to over 120 years of writings that vividly demonstrate that there have always been women in librarianship who were not silent or complacent or lacking in ambition.

In 1983, Robinson, who studied mobility and career patterns in a large population of female and male academic librarians, found a statistically significant relationship between mobility and position level. Her research also showed that men gained greater position levels through mobility, and even when men and women were moving in order to advance their careers, rather than for personal or family reasons, men achieved greater position advancement. Robinson examined career interruptions and leaves of both men and women in order to determine the influence of work interruptions on careers. While women more frequently took leaves from work, and these were more usually personal or family related leaves, there was no statistically significant difference in position

advancement between women who had interrupted their careers and those who did not. Robinson concluded neither the issue of job mobility nor career interruption could be held responsible for the differences in career progression of men and women in academic librarianship.

In 1989, Moran replicated the research on career progression she had done some ten years earlier. She found there had been significant changes in the career progression patterns of female academic library administrators. The personal characteristics of male and female library directors remained unchanged, but professional characteristics showed statistically significant differences. In the 1983 study, neither educational level nor professional activities were associated with female success in career advancement, and internal succession was the norm. By 1989, professional characteristics of advanced degrees, publications, professional activity, and mobility were associated with success of both men and women. In 1989, Moran replicated the research on career progression she had done some ten years earlier. She found there had been significant changes in the career progression patterns of female academic library administrators. The personal characteristics of male and female library directors remained unchanged, but professional characteristics showed statistically significant differences. In the 1983 study, neither educational level nor professional activities were associated with female success in career advancement, and internal succession was the norm. By 1989, professional characteristics of advanced degrees, publications, professional activity, and mobility were associated with success of both men and women.

Irvine, (1985) Says, Among the characteristics that have implications for women and men aspiring to administrative careers were educational preparation and publications. Confirming previous research in librarianship, these men were significantly more likely than women to have subject masters in addition to their library degrees. Additional master's degrees continue to be a plus for individuals seeking administrative careers." Academic credentials and publication activities are generally recognized as highly desirable accouterments of success in higher education. Men possessed such characteristics to a greater degree than did women. In particular, publishing affords substantial opportunities to become known among one's colleagues and to demonstrate affinity for research endeavor.

Contribution of Female Librarians to the Nigeria Development

Women Librarians have contributed greatly to nation building in this century in various ways.

Meeting the information needs of women, girls and Nigerians as a whole is the major contribution of the

Library field to development. 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, develop 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 Millennium Development Goal on gender equality. Girl child education has improved greatly lately because Women librarians are working in our schools libraries.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life. Women play a crucial role in realizing basic human rights for all and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Meeting the information needs of women is a major contribution of the library field to global development. The United Nations and its agencies have long encouraged the world community to discourage gender stereotypes and to strengthen the status of women within the family and in society as a whole. One of the key ways of doing so is by supporting the education of women, and especially girls. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Women Librarians has contributed greatly to development in this twenty century.

In the area of career building female librarians has contributed to development in Nigeria we now have many female professors in library and information sciences. Many universities now offer the course LIS and many graduates has been produced. Furthermore, many women librarians working in the library in Nigeria universities and polytechnic has contributed to the development of education in Nigeria by serving as support the all the degrees offers in the schools. No university can stand without a library.

Rural development has always be the priority focus of the Nigeria government. A variety of Facilities and infrastructure were built to support the process of the rural community social and economic development; rural public libraries are one of these facilities. Public library has always been viewed as an important entity in a local community development and empowerment process, particularly in a rural and disadvantaged community. It has been established as a crucial element in the life of community members, as it provides information that is essential for the community progress. However, in the

beginning, many early public libraries had denied women and children right to use libraries; thus, they are forced to rely on their male relatives for access to library resources. Borrowers were not permitted to wander amid the stacks; children (as well as women, in some places) were not allowed inside libraries at all in the contemporary public library environment, the situation has change. Today women and children has become the primary focus of any services, programs or activities develop by a public library. Many librarians presently seem to be developing more programs that attract women more than men. This is because they (women and children) have always been enthusiastic and devoted users of public libraries.

Since I have been working here as a librarian, I notice that the women and children participation and involvement is this library is very encouraging. I believe this library really do contribute to their self-development.

Women like the internet services provided by the public libraries. They like to use the internet service provided for free to users of the rural public library, for many personal referencing and activities. I am member of this library and I always come here at least three times a week. I like the internet service. I use it all the time ... for personal stuff like last week I wanted to buy new hand phone, so I went in the internet to do some searching about the phone brands and make do comparison. It is a good service. I like surfing the net, I don't have internet at home, so I always come here to check my email and chat with friends. The librarians always help us if we need assistance with the internet service.

Women Self-improvement Programs Other than library collections and resources that were develop to cater the local rural women information needs, many of the Nigeria local rural public library also manages to develop several in-house programs too. For instance there have been some new activity developments in the library, like computer classes and language day [once a week English day. In this day all patrons are encourage to speak only in English]. This special language day was introduced by the librarian.

In Nigeria, the Dr. (Mrs.) Victoria Okojie a female Librarian is the first Registrar of the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN).Under this same administration, a lot of reforms in policies, training and status have taken place.

CONCLUSION

A review of the literature regarding status, characteristics and contribution of women Librarians in Nigeria revealed that women have contributed to development in various ways. It revealed that gender inequality between men and women Librarians have drastically reduced because of education of women, because both male and female

Librarians are being taught with the same academic curriculum. In Nigeria, many women Librarians are now occupying Management positions in various academic Libraries, Research Libraries and others. In terms of the number, the women Librarian have increased greatly in this century. Although they are still not proportionately represented. Noteworthy studies described the demographic profiles and professional characteristics and qualifications of women librarians as significantly change over time.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This is a review article, we use this opportunity to acknowledge all the Authors of articles and the conference papers reviewed as all are reflected in the reference section of this review work. We appreciate you all.

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