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ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE SHARING PRACTICES AMONG LIBRARIANS: A CASE STUDY OF ABDULLAHI FODIYO LIBRARY, SOKOTO, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper assessed knowledge sharing practices among librarians in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library (AFL). The objectives of the study is to assess the extent of knowledge sharing, find out the knowledge sharing strategies and to establish the challenges militating knowledge sharing in the library. The study adopted descriptive research design using a survey approach. Questionnaire was used as instrument for collecting data. Frequency count, table and percentages were used to analyze the data collected due to the descriptive nature of the study. The findings of the study revealed that librarians shared their knowledge mostly on personal development. While staff meetings are considered as the major strategic method used in sharing knowledge among librarians followed by personal discussion among colleagues. It was revealed that challenges militating against knowledge sharing includes lack of sponsorship of staff to attend seminars, workshops/conferences, lack mentoring and lack of research collaboration among others. The study provides recommendations that will enhance knowledge sharing among librarians in Abdullahi Fodiyo Libraries such as provision of ICT facilities, presentation of incentives to staff and mentoring among staff.

Keywords: Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Management, Librarians, Academic Libraries

Introduction
Knowledge Management (KM) is an emerging discipline focusing on the various management processes that facilitate identifying, storing, applying, sharing, and renewing knowledge to achieve an organization's objectives. Knowledge management in any organisation aim at explaining how to transform both personal and organizational information into individual and collective knowledge (Etim, 2010). There are various knowledge management process that are carried out in organisations. These processes include knowledge creation, acquisition, organisation, sharing, application and utilization for the benefit of both individuals and organisations. Knowledge sharing as a process in knowledge management is a human attribute that is deemed critical to the success of an organisation. According to Connelly (2000), knowledge sharing practices is a set of behaviours that involve the exchange of information or assistance to others.

Some employees do not like to share their personal knowledge because they see knowledge as a strong resource and a guarantee for their continuity in organisation (Goh, 2002). He equally stressed that challenges faced by organizations and institutions is the ability to utilize individuals' intellectual capacities to achieve organisation objectives. Similarly, Wang and Noe (2010) observed that knowledge sharing among staff provides the organization with the opportunity to discover more knowledge resources for future investment. As such, identifying factors affecting knowledge management can pave the way for knowledge sharing culture in organisation. Organisations such as university libraries in developed countries are increasingly adopting knowledge management practices and knowledge sharing strategies to remain competitive in the knowledge-based economy (KBE). Similarly, Daneshgar and Parirokh (2012) observed that librarians in developed nations capture knowledge directly or indirectly from information resources and then the knowledge is accessed and shared by the librarians in order to be contextualized and used for enhancing services. Today, the advent of the internet and related technological developments have transformed the nature of library and information services worldwide via information sharing ability.

Knowledge sharing culture has emerged as a further significant influence on library practices in developed countries. Organisations in developed countries embrace vast amounts of knowledge in various areas and its sharing is considered important for providing quality information services, improving overall performance and becoming more relevant (Habtamu, 2011). However, there are associated strategies which contemporary organisations employ to promote knowledge sharing. These strategies include creating opportunities for employees to interact, whether formally or informally, appropriate rewards, recognition, and compensation to drive knowledge sharing. Incentives are provided to employees in short term and long term to foster knowledge sharing (Kolawole, 2015). Knowledge sharing has brought significant development in organisation in developed countries due to the importance attached it.

However, within Africa context, implementing practicing knowledge sharing practices may be difficult. In spite of the relevance of work areas to promote research and make the libraries the centre of academic scholarship, Africa university libraries have been portrayed negatively. Habtamu (2011) supported this assertion and suggested that in order to create a smooth flow of tacit and explicit knowledge in developing nations, there is need to address many challenges related to information technology (IT), trust and incentive among other.

Nigerian university libraries are no exception from the above-mentioned challenges faced in Africa. University libraries are faced with insufficient funds, lack of internet access by librarians, inadequate sharing tools and absence of mentoring among others (Kolawole, 2015). Aranda and Fernandez (2002) stressed that effective sharing of knowledge and resource is consequently one of the most important challenges facing librarians in university libraries. There are no regular or systematic ways of sharing both explicit and tacit knowledge among librarians, and making such knowledge available to others in order to improve and add value to the operations of their libraries.

Statement of the Problem

Knowledge sharing (KS) in organisations has been recognized both globally and locally as demonstrated above. From the above background, the ideal knowledge sharing practices is a process involving knowledge dissemination and transfer to

improve an organization's performance and achieve its objectives. From the studies in the background, little studies were conducted on knowledge sharing in academic libraries which addressed the challenges of successful knowledge sharing and knowledge sharing in academic libraries. The university libraries in developed countries like Nigeria might have different approaches. This is a gap. Therefore, this study determined knowledge sharing strategies in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library (AFL). In addition, no study had addressed the assessment of knowledge sharing among university librarians. In addition, the practice of knowledge sharing might not be effective in Abdullahi Fodiyo library which prompted this research study. This study will specifically assess knowledge sharing with particular interest in assessing the extent of knowledge sharing, knowledge sharing strategies and the challenges militating against knowledge sharing in Abdullahi Fodiyo libraries.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

1. To assess the extent of knowledge sharing in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library (AFL)
2. To determine the Knowledge sharing strategies available in AFL
3. To establish the challenges militating against knowledge sharing in AFL

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of knowledge sharing practices in AF L?
2. What are the knowledge sharing strategies available in AFL?
3. What are the challenges militating against knowledge sharing in AFL?

Review of Related Literature

Knowledge sharing (KS) is viewed as a concept through which library staff can help transform the library into a more efficient, knowledge sharing institution through knowledge application and innovation when utilized properly (Wang and Noe, 2010). Therefore, it is a process through which library staff (librarians) mutually exchanges knowledge and jointly creates new knowledge. Similarly, Lin, Lee, and Wang (2009) define knowledge sharing as a social interaction culture that involve the exchange of staff knowledge, skills and experiences through the library operation services, department or organization. Utilization of the available knowledge to improve the organizations performance by staff is the underlying purpose in any library setting.

However, there should be mechanisms that are put in place in order to encourage knowledge sharing; this is can be like mutual trust among the staff. To support the assertion, Lawson, et. al. (2009) stressed that knowledge sharing can be achieved through the process of ‘socialization’, which is a mechanism by which knowledge is shared across the boundaries of the organisation. The knowledge sharing culture should be a priority to librarians in the course of discharging their duties. This is because libraries are the custodians of knowledge in their parent organisations and sharing of knowledge among librarians will not only improve performance but also individual self development will be achieved.

Universities around the world are embracing the emerging demand for knowledge management (KM) practices and are ranking knowledge sharing (KS) as one of their top priorities (Kim and Lee, 2006). Knowledge management and knowledge sharing are important features for organizational or institutional survival. As a way of responding to this demand, university libraries especially in developed

countries have developed expert systems to facilitate the creation and acquisition of knowledge among librarians. For instance, a study by Dankert and Dempsey (2002) in the United States of America (U.S.) at DePaul University Libraries revealed that libraries had developed an annual programme of structured peer to peer instruction to keep communication open among subject librarians at all its branches. It was meant to facilitate the sharing of subject expertise and to inculcate co-operation and collaboration through providing an ongoing staff development. The study have shown that most universities are implementing knowledge management programmes and tools to improve knowledge sharing among academics and library staff. The study failed to show the extent of knowledge sharing which this study was interested on.

White (2004) in a study she carried out at Oxford University Library Services (OULS), the findings revealed how university libraries can benefit from utilizing a knowledge management system (KMS) by integrating explicit and tacit knowledge into the whole process of library services. The study further revealed knowledge sharing was the major process in knowledge management to be given more attention. Rah, Gul and Ashraf (2010) states that university libraries are shifting towards KM and it is important for libraries to find ways of surviving in the knowledge-based economy (KBE). The development of knowledge expert systems would facilitate knowledge production and sharing in university libraries. It is clear that university libraries in developed nations applied various methods or strategies to benefit from knowledge sharing.

In developing nations, one of the challenges with organisations and libraries inability to share the available knowledge effectively and exchange experiences acquired within and outside the library (Cheng, Ho and Lau, 2009). Jain's (2007) conducted a study on knowledge management practices in East and Southern African academic libraries. The study revealed that only few numbers of libraries incorporated a knowledge management strategy component in their library strategies. Furthermore, even though all the university librarians are the target population of the study and responded, professed that their libraries were learning organisations, half of them admitted to not having a culture of knowledge sharing in their libraries. Parirokh, Daneshgar, & Fattahi (2008) agreed with Jain that academic libraries do not generally have specific knowledge management policies and strategies in place. This gap (lack of sharing knowledge) in libraries are common among developing countries. It might be attributed to many factors affecting the staff directly or indirectly as observed among some university libraries.

In another South African context, a study by Mphidi and Snyman (2004) on the utilization of an intranet as a knowledge management tool in academic libraries found that knowledge sharing was not widespread in university libraries even though the utilization of the intranet as a knowledge sharing tool was gaining popularity. While, Roknuzzaman and Umemoto (2009), on the other hand recommends the replacement of the intranet with an internal wiki, followed by a knowledge audit to access hidden staff talent. However, it was found that the low willingness of staff to share their knowledge and difficulties in managing tacit knowledge were two general problems when applying KS in libraries. The above literatures shows that there are enamous challenges attached to knowledge sharing. The above studies shows that there are numerous challenges in knowledge sharing and each organisation with its own peculiar challenges. This study established the challenges militating against knowledge sharing in AFL.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design using a survey approach. The study was conducted in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State, Nigeria. Abdullahi Fodiyo Library was selected because the library has the largest population of librarians and equally has elements of knowledge management practices compared to other academic libraries in Sokoto state, Nigeria. The population of the study includes all the professional and Para-professional librarians. There are 140 librarians. Random sample technique was used to select respondents for the study. A questionnaire with both open and close-ended questions was used to collect data from librarians. One hundred and three (103) questionnaires were distributed to users using random sampling techniques. Out of one hundred and three (103) questionnaires administered to the users, ninety-six (96) were returned which represent 93.2% response rate for the study. Frequency count and percentages were used to analyze the data collected. This is because of the descriptive nature of the study.

Data Analysis

Gender and Years of working Experience

Table 1: Demographic of Respondents

S/N	Variables	Sub-variables	Frequency	Percentage %
1	**Gender**	Male	72	75
		Female	24	25
		Total	**96**	**100%**
2	**Work Experience**	1-10 years	31	32.3
		11-20 years	43	44.8
		21-30 years	14	18.6
		31-40 years	6	6.2
		41 years above	2	2.1
		Total	**96**	**100%**

The researcher sought to understand the gender and work experience of the respondents in order to be able to conceptualize the level of participation of the targeted population in knowledge sharing in university library. *The majority of the respondents are male with 75% over the female with 25% response.* The implication of this is that there are more male librarians in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library, Sokoto, Nigeria than their female counterpart. This might be attributed to the facts that the male counterparts were more educated in the western education than the female in northern Nigeria and the culture of the northern tribes in Nigeria equally contributed to the low level of female enrolled in higher education and librarianship to be specific. Secondly, librarianship as a profession was more embraced by the male in the northern Nigeria compared to the female.

On work experience, majority of the respondents 43 (44.8%) had more than eleven years' experience working in libraries while 31(32.3%) had less than 10 years' work experience. The respondents with more than 21 years work experience had 18.6% and 6 (6.2%) of the respondents have more than 31 years work experience. The least on the table was respondents with 41 years above work experience with only 2.1%. This implies that majority of the respondents are still very young and active in library profession. Knowledge sharing culture if implemented in the library would assist the personnel tap and retained the major types of knowledge. This is because the majority of the workforce in the libraries have more than 11 years working

experience which is enough to depend on their competency for knowledge sharing. See table 1 for details.

Extent of Knowledge Sharing

Table 2: The extent of knowledge sharing in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library

S/N	Statement	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Share knowledge about library profession	16	16.7%
2	Share knowledge about research collaboration	10	10.4%
3	Share knowledge about personal development	31	32.3%
4	Share knowledge about ICT matters	14	14.6%
5	Share knowledge about readers services and circulation	10	10.4%
6	Share knowledge about technical issues	7	7.3%
7	Share knowledge about library users	8	8.3%
	Total	**96**	**100%**

The researcher sought to established the extent of knowledge sharing in among staff at Abdullahi Fodiyo library. Result shows majority of the respondents with 31 (32.3%) shared knowledge about personal development in the library. This was followed by 16 (16.7%) of respondents that shared knowledge on library profession. Respondents with 14 (14.6%) share knowledge on ICT matters while respondents with 10 (10.4%) share knowledge on research collaboration and about readers services/circulation in the library. The least on the table are respondents who shared knowledge about technical issues 7 (7.3%) and about library users 8 (8.3%). The implication is that majority shared knowledge on personal development meaning knowledge on library activities are not properly share within the library. This result conforms with Jain's (2007) who conducted a study on knowledge management practices in East and Southern African academic libraries. The result shows that, even though all the university librarians are the target population of the study and responded, professed that their libraries were learning organisations, half of them admitted to not having a culture of knowledge sharing in their libraries. The results are consistent with Onifade, (2015) in his research titled knowledge sharing among librarians in university libraries which revealed that most university staff had positive perception about knowledge sharing in KM practices. The study equally revealed that library staff mostly shared their knowledge through meetings, face to face discussion and community practices. This means librarians do not share their professional experience and skills with their fellow colleagues. See table 2 for details.

Knowledge Sharing Strategies

Table 3: Knowledge sharing strategies available in AFL

S/N	Sharing strategies	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Staff meetings	40	41.7%
2	Seminar, Conferences and Workshops	8	8.3%
3	Mentoring	4	4.2%
4	Brainstorming	12	12.5%
5	Research collaboration	9	9.3 %
6	Personal discussion with colleagues	23	24.0%
	Total	**96**	**100%**

The researcher equally established knowledge sharing strategies in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library. Majority of the respondents with 40 (41.7%) indicates staff meetings as the strategic for knowledge sharing in the library. This was followed by personal discussion with colleagues with 23 (24.0%). Respondents with 12 (12.5%) indicates that brainstorming is the strategic for knowledge sharing while respondents with 9 (9.3%) indicate research collaboration as the strategic for knowledge sharing. Respondents with 8 (8.3%) indicate seminar, conference and workshops as strategic for knowledge sharing while mentoring have the least on the table with 4 (4.2%) as strategic for knowledge sharing in the library. From the above table, majority respondents indicate staff meeting as the strategic for knowledge sharing while mentoring have the least indicating lack of mentoring in the library. This is a clear indication that in academic settings, regular meetings in the library is one of the sources for sharing knowledge among librarians. This was collaborated *with* Kabiru (2015) in his research study on knowledge management strategies and practices in Nigerian agricultural research institutes. The study revealed that staff meetings is one of the strategic methods used to facilitate knowledge sharing.

Challenges of Knowledge Sharing

Table 4: Challenges militating against knowledge sharing in AFL

S/N	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Lack of incentives	9	9.4
2	Lack of sponsorship to attend seminars, conference and workshop	28	29.2
3	Staff reluctant to share knowledge	10	10.4
4	Lack of mentoring	25	26.0
5	Inadequate staff meetings	3	3.1
6	Lack of research collaboration	16	16.7
7	Inadequate ICT facilities to enhance knowledge sharing	5	5.2
	Total	**96**	**100%**

To be able to established challenges in knowledge sharing, librarians were asked indicate the types of challenge in the library. Results for table 4 shows majority of the respondents with 28 (29.2%) indicates Lack sponsorship to attend seminars, conference and workshop as the challenges in knowledge sharing. Lack of mentoring came second with 25 (26.0%) respondents as the challenge for knowledge sharing in the library. Respondents with 16 (16.7%) indicate lack of research collaboration as the knowledge sharing challenge while staff reluctant to share knowledge as a challenge had 10 (10,4%). This is followed by lack of incentives with 9 (9.4%).

Respondents with 5 (5.2%) indicate inadequate ICT facilities as challenges in knowledge sharing. Inadequate staff meeting was the least with 3 (3.1%). The result clearly indicates that lack of sponsorship to attend seminars, conference and workshop are the major challenges and lack of mentoring also is another challenge of knowledge sharing in the library. This collaborated Edom (2013) in his study "librarians challenges of knowledge management in state-owned university libraries in Nigeria", identified inadequate funding, lack of mentorship, lack of staff development, inadequate technology tools and lack of cooperation among others as problems of knowledge management (KM) in Nigerian state university libraries. See table 4 for details.

Conclusion

The importance of knowledge sharing in university library cannot be over emphasized. This study concluded that, despite the fact that librarians understand the importance and concepts of knowledge sharing in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library, they slightly share knowledge with one another. There are various strategies for sharing knowledge among library staff such as regular meetings, research collaboration, professional forums and through conferences, seminars or workshops. Regular staff meetings emerged as the major strategic used in the university library to shared available knowledge among others. The study equally discovered challenges that militates against knowledge sharing in the library among librarian which includes lack of sponsorship to attend seminars, workshop and conference to share knowledge and poor mentoring among staff. However, if incentives are given to librarians and mentoring is encouraged, it will go a long way to motivate an improve knowledge sharing among librarians.

Recommendations

1. Incentives should be introduced as a mechanism to motivate librarians to share knowledge in the library. This can be in form of presentation of letter for appreciation, promotion of staff, sponsorship to attend seminar, conference etc.
2. ICT facilities should be available and accessible to enhance knowledge sharing among libraries and its staff. There should be in-house training for staff on the use of ICT facilities to share knowledge.
3. Mentoring among librarians should be encouraged. This will help in promoting knowledge sharing in the library. Senior staff should be encourage to collaborate with junior colleagues in research, paper presentation and daily office activities.
4. Platforms such as librarians' forum should be introduced to encourage librarians join for the purpose of knowledge sharing.

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