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Interpersonal Skills as Correlate of Career Development among Librarians in Academic Libraries in South-South Nigeria

¹Augustina Chinwe Ekeruche

²Anthonia U. Echedom

¹College of Education Library, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria

²Department of Library and Information Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examined interpersonal skills as correlate of career development of librarians in academic libraries in South - South, Nigeria. Correlational survey design was adopted to conduct the study. The population of the study is 301 comprising of librarians in south-south, Nigeria. There was no sampling. Questionnaire was used as the method of data collection Data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics. For the research questions, analysis was done using Pearson Product Moment correlational coefficient (PPMC) and point biserial correlation coefficient (r) while multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed among others that; There is a high positive relationship between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries, and there exist a significant relationship between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries and it revealed low negative relationship between work experience of librarians and their career development in academic libraries and there is a significant relationship between work experience of librarians and their career development in academic libraries. High possessions of interpersonal skills increase librarian's career development significantly in academic libraries in South-South Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others; that library management should engage librarians in a lot of interpersonal skills and communication in the course of their job, the university management should train librarians while on the job, and their skills need to be updated through training and development program, orientation, induction, inventory, conferences, workshop and seminars in order to enhance their interpersonal skills and research.

Keywords

Interpersonal skills, career development, academic libraries, librarians, Nigeria

CONTACT Augustina Chinwe Ekeruche @ augustinaa30@gmail.com

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Introduction

Interpersonal skills entail relationship among workers. Papandrea (2021) stated that most human resource manager and recruiting agencies look out for interpersonal skills like communication skills, problem-solving and conflict resolution, emotional intelligence and positivity, leadership, and teamwork. Therefore, librarians must acquire interpersonal skills. According to Kerr (2019), one of the most in-demand 'soft' skills is interpersonal skills. When we communicate with others, we show these characteristics and behaviors. Also, the most basic aspect of interaction, such as one's attitude toward others and body language are crucial aspect of one's interpersonal abilities. Beqiri (2018) postulated that effective interpersonal skills are required to form connections and establish relationships. Also, Beqiri outlined the type of interpersonal skills to include; verbal communication, active listening, body language, openness, negotiation skills, decision making and problem-solving skills, conflict resolution, assertiveness, positive attitude, teamwork and empathy.

There is a growing recognition that the need for interpersonal skills apply to internal peer and management relations as well as to user-contact activities. Librarians need good communication skills, record-keeping skills, teaching skills, information research skills and the ability to evaluate material and to be organized. Librarians also need computer skills and they should know how to preserve the documents from damage. Management skills may also be useful as librarians are involved in team management (Koganuramath & Angadi, 2018). Librarians need to be friendly, maintain enthusiasm, pleasing personality, helpful and patient when dealing with users, able to remain calm and polite under stress, accurate, quick and efficient; able to work on their own, self-motivated, able to ask for help if it is needed.

Information is an intangible substance that must be sent by the speaker and received by an active listener. Koganuramath and Angadi (2018) affirmed that interpersonal skills and communication skills are two "must-have skills" for librarians to be able to publicize themselves in the librarianship profession, the skills they have to offer, the library products, and services as well as manage a good public relations. Aliu and Eneh (2011) posited that in this 21st century, librarians should possess the following good interpersonal communication skills, which include; possession of calm, welcoming facial expression that elicits warmth and readiness to assist, use of a tone of voice appropriate to the nature of the transaction, communicate in a cordial, receptive and encouraging manner, provide the clientele the freedom and relaxed mind to state his/her information needs in his/her own best understanding without being harassed and employ an open-ended questioning method to encourage the patron to expand on his request.

Librarians most possess the interpersonal skills for answering reference queries Pellack (2003) posited that librarians who have a knack for interpersonal skills do very well both at the reference desk and interacting with their co-workers. Pellack, further postulates that reference librarians are expected to interact effectively with a variety of clientele with skills such as approachability, showing interest and verbal and non-verbal cues and these are the hallmark of interpersonal skills. Rothwell (2004) notes that communication skills are critical to landing a job, receiving promotion and performing effectively in the workplace. Good interpersonal skill is one of the factors that distinguish a reference librarian. Interpersonal communication in reference services facilitate understanding of users' queries and enhance the articulation of answers to users' inquiries. Therefore, librarians should acquire interpersonal skills to enhance their carrier development

Career development according to Indeed Editorial Team (2020) is a profession, occupation, trade or vocation and is also referred to as a career. A career can also be seen as what librarians do for progression which can vary from requiring rigorous training and education to those that a particular task can be accomplished. To affirm that, Trisliatan et-al (2018) states that librarian's career development in the university's (academic) library is the process of recruitment which places more emphasis on bureaucratic aspect rather than the suitability of their educational background and ability. Therefore, Career development is a set of individual improvement capabilities process that they undergo to achieve a desirable career, which is aimed at adjusting between the needs and goals of employees with career opportunities that are available in companies currently and in the future (Prajapati, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Career development is the gateway that supports librarians to enhance their skills and knowledge which in turn boosts their capabilities, increases efficiency, mastery in their routines, and a better understanding of their career. From the literature, the skill that is a must-have for librarians to succeed is interpersonal skills. Academic Librarians must have interpersonal skills to establish good rapport with colleagues in order to serve effectively. Inadequate interpersonal skills may lead to poor performance in their career. In the context of academic libraries in the South-South region of Nigeria, there is a need to examine the correlation between interpersonal skills and career development among librarians. Interpersonal skills encompass the ability to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and build positive relationships within a professional setting. Career development refers to the growth, advancement, and overall professional success of librarians in their chosen field. Despite the recognized importance of interpersonal skills in the workplace, there is limited research focusing specifically on the relationship between interpersonal skills

and career development among librarians in academic libraries in the South-South region of Nigeria. This knowledge gap hinders the understanding of the impact that interpersonal skills may have on the career trajectories and job satisfaction of librarians in this specific context.

Preliminary investigation conducted by the researcher revealed that a lot of librarians have been stagnant for years because they fail to meet up with requirement for publication. Librarians whether aged or young need time, support, mentoring, experience and monetary and infrastructural support to build their research competencies to the peak. Consequently, it is assumed that no university can rise above the level of services offered by her library. Thus, for a university library to remain afloat and for efficient and effective services, competent, experienced, vibrant, young, skilled, educated and dedicated librarians are needed to drive this objective. The researchers had observed that most librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria seemed not to be concerned about advancement in their career. This could be lack of concern for career advancement and poor interpersonal skills. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine interpersonal skills as correlate of career development of librarians in academic libraries in South - South, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study intends to determine how interpersonal skills correlate with career development of librarians in academics libraries in South - South, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study seeks to find out:

1. The relationship between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South - South, Nigeria.
2. The relationship among Interpersonal skills and research competence of Librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South - South, Nigeria
3. The relationship between work experience of Librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South - South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The research questions that this study will address are:

1. What is the relationship between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South - South, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship among Interpersonal skills and research competence of Librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South - South, Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between work experience of Librarians and their career development in university libraries in South - South, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South- South, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship among interpersonal skills and research competence of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South- South, Nigeria.
3. There is no significant relationship between work experience of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South- South, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

There is a growing recognition that the need for interpersonal skills apply to internal peer and management relations as well as to user-contact activities. Librarians need good communication skills, record-keeping skills, teaching skills, information research skills and the ability to evaluate material and to be organized. Librarians also need computer skills and they should know how to preserve the documents from damage. Management skills may also be useful, as librarians are involved in team management (Koganuramath & Angadi, 2018). Librarians need to be friendly, maintain enthusiasm, pleasing personality, helpful and patient when dealing with users, able to remain calm and polite under stress, accurate, quick and efficient; able to work on their own, self-motivated, able to ask for help if it is needed.

However, Tanawade (2011) affirmed that interpersonal skill is wholly applied to internal peer and management relations as well as to user-contact activities. Librarians need good communication skills, record-keeping skills, teaching skills, information research skills, and the ability to evaluate material and to be organized. Librarians Information is an intangible substance that must be sent by the speaker and received by an active listener. Koganuramath and Angadi (2018) affirmed that interpersonal skills and communication skills are two must-have skills for librarians to be able to publicize themselves in the librarianship profession the skills they have to offer, the library products, and services as well as manage a good public relations. Aliu and Eneh (2011) posited that in this 21st century, librarians should possess the following good interpersonal communication skills, which include; possession of calm, welcoming facial expression that elicits warmth and readiness to assist, use a tone of voice appropriate to the nature of the transaction, communicate in a cordial, receptive and encouraging manner, provide the clientele the freedom and relaxed mind to state his information need in his own best understanding without being harassed and employ an open-ended questioning method to encourage the patron to expand on his request.

Librarians with low interpersonal skills perform below expectation while those with high skills perform better. Pellack (2003) posited that librarians who have

a knack for interpersonal skills do very well both at the reference desk and interacting with their co-workers. Pellack, further postulates that reference librarians are expected to interact effectively with a variety of clientele with skills such as approachability, showing interest, and verbal and non-verbal cues and these are the hallmarks of interpersonal skills. Rothwell (2004) notes that communication skills are critical to landing a job, receiving a promotion, and performing effectively in the workplace. Good interpersonal skill is one of the factors that distinguish a reference librarian. Interpersonal communication in reference services facilitates understanding of users' queries and enhances the articulation of answers to users' inquiries.

Work experience also influence career development of librarians positively or negatively. According to Animasahun and Oludemi (2013) working experience has always been viewed as a predictor of career commitment. Working experience is often used as standard criteria for recruitment purposes with the view that those with more years of experience in a given field are more likely to be committed and perform better. This therefore means that those below ten years in the service, that are not committed, seem to have taken their career as a source of livelihood rather than a career path. Jones, Zanko and Kriflik (2006) reported that tenureship had a positive association to career commitment. It can be understood that the longer an individual stays in a career the more committed such individual

A study conducted by Farroq, et al (2016) on current and required competencies of university librarians in Pakistan. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant gap between the perceptions of university librarians about their present skills and requirements. Also, there is no significant relationship between the length of job (i. e experience), grade, and skills of academic librarians Similarly, another study conducted by Exner, (2019) on the development of research competencies among academic librarians This study found that the experience of being a researcher-librarian is one of learning sharpened by the library context. A study conducted by Gbaje, Yani and Odies (2018) on assessing the competencies and skills of academic librarians in Nigeria: for scholarly communication. The study discovered among others, a high percentage of the sampled academic librarians use commercial and open access publishing platforms and open access policies and copyright

Career development is the process of learning and improving your skills so that you can do your job better and progress to better jobs. According to Half (2021), career development does not happen overnight; rather, it is a continuous process that you work on during your professional life, with no one-size-fits-all solution. Many of the conventional signs of achievement, such as getting a promotion, earning a pay raise, or excelling at performance appraisal time, are all part of developing

your career. Informa UK Limited (2021) affirmed that analyzing the career path of librarians can be a daunting thought, and it can be difficult to know where to start when it comes to planning your progression.

Barnett (2019) postulates that librarians must consult job descriptions of roles they find interesting, as this will make the job be done effortlessly. Barnett, further stated that starter librarians must do a gap analysis of their skill set so that they could plan their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) around plugging those gaps, and the methods that can be employed include attending conferences and training courses. Trisliatanto, et-al (2018) posited that a librarian's career development can be achieved by doing many different things, for example, by getting a promotion, doing an assessment, doing scientific research, and bettering the resources. They further categorized the factors of career development of librarians into three which are; motivation factors, human capital factors and librarian functional factor.

More so, Tucker (2008) affirmed that librarians can develop their careers via acquiring university certification or development acquired from the professional body they belong to. This involves striving to get a higher degree which will lead to increased profile, better wages and fulfillment. Tucker, also emphasized the need for librarians to pitch tent with professional bodies/ associations that align with their career path. Balarabe, et al (2016) published resolved career projection of librarians to include Graduate Assistant, Assistant Librarian, Librarian II, Librarian I, Senior Librarian, Deputy University Librarian, and University Librarian.

Methodology

The study used correlational research design. Nworgu, (2015) states that a correlational design is a research design where a researcher seeks to establish relationship between two or more variables. This study seeks to explore the relationship between interpersonal skills and career development of librarians in academic libraries in South -South Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 301 (Three Hundred and one) professional librarians working in academic libraries in South- South, Nigeria. See Appendix A. The researcher choose librarians for they are the ones that manned the resources in the library and also because they can be easily reached without much difficulty. The study adopted census Sampling Technique. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) affirmed that the census sampling technique provides a true measure of the population by eradicating sampling errors. Therefore, the entire population was used which is 301 (three hundred and one) librarians in academic libraries in South- South, Nigeria.

The study used structured questionnaire as the method of data collection. The internal reliability coefficient for the questionnaire items on career development is 0.925 while the reliability coefficient for interpersonal skills of librarians was kr-20 0.830. Descriptive and inferential statistics was adopted for the method of data

analysis. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient r and point-biserial correlation were used respectively to analyse the research questions why multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South- South, Nigeria?

Table 1: Pearson r on the interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries

Sources of variation	N	Librarians Research competences r	Librarians Career development r	Remark
Librarians Research competences	301	1	0.89	High positive relationship
Librarians Career development	301	0.89	1	

In Table 1, it was reported that a very high positive relationship of 0.89 exists between librarians' interpersonal skills and librarians' career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship among interpersonal skills, research competence of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of regression analysis on relationship among interpersonal skills, research competence of Librarians and their career development in academic libraries

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Remark
0.95	0.90	0.90	Very High positive relationship

Table 2 shows that a very high positive relationship of 0.95 exist among interpersonal skills, research competences of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Question 3

What nature of relationship exists between work experience of Librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 3: Point-Biserial correlation (r_{pb}) on work experience of librarians and their career development in academic libraries

Sources of variation	N	Work experience r_{pb}	Librarians Career development r_{pb}	Remark
Work experience	301	1	-0.10	Low negative relationship
Librarians Career development	301	-0.10	1	

In Table 3 it was recorded that a low negative relationship of -0.10 exists between work experience and librarians career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses 1

There is no significant relationship between interpersonal skills of Librarians and their career development in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 4: t-test on the relationship between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries

N	Df	Cal. T	P-value	Remark
301	299	8.81	0.00	Significant

Table 4 reveals that at 0.05 level of significance and 299df, the calculated t 8.81 with P-value 0.00 which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship existing between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship among interpersonal skills, research competence of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 5: Summary of regression analysis on the relationship existing among interpersonal skills, research competence of Librarians and their career development in academic libraries

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Df	Cal. F	Pvalue	Remark
0.95	0.90	0.90	299	1351.79	0.00	Significant

Table 5 reports that at 0.05 level of significance 3df numerator and 299df denominator, the calculated F1351.79 with P-value 0.000 which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This goes to mean that a significant relationship exists among interpersonal skills, research competence of Librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between work experience of Librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 6: t-test on the relationship between work experience of librarians and their career development in academic libraries

N	Df	Cal. T	P-value	Remark
301	299	3.41	0.00	Significant

Table 6 reports that at 0.05 level of significance and 299df, the calculated t 3.41 with Pvalue 0.00 which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship existing between work experience of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis conducted, the following findings emerged;

1. There is a very high positive relationship of 0.89 between librarians' interpersonal skills and librarians' career development in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
2. There is a very high positive relationship of 0.95 existing among interpersonal skills, research competences of librarians' and their career development in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
3. There is a low negative relationship of -0.10 between work experience and librarians career development in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
4. There is a significant relationship existing between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
5. There is a significant relationship among interpersonal skills, research competence of Librarians and their career development in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria
6. There is a significant relationship existing between work experience of librarians' and their career development in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study showed that there is a very high positive relationship of 0.89 between librarians' interpersonal skills and librarians' career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This has shown that librarians in south-south, Nigeria possessed high interpersonal skills. The study agrees to the study conducted by Jeyshankar (2018) wherein the study revealed that there is a positive relationship between interpersonal skills and library and information science professionals. On the hypothesis tested, it revealed a significant relationship existing between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Koganuramath and Angadi (2018) affirmed that interpersonal skills and communication skills are two must-have skills for librarians

to be able to publicize themselves in the librarianship profession the skills they have to offer, the library products, and services as well as manage a good public relations.

The outcome of this study revealed a very high positive relationship of 0.95 existing among interpersonal skills, research competences of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This entails that the respondents are highly competent in term of research for carrier development. The current study is related to the outcome of the study conducted by Siddiqi, et-al (2015) findings of the study revealed that there is a positive relationship between interpersonal skills, analytical skills and career development. On the hypothesis tested, it revealed that there is a significant relationship existing between interpersonal skills of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Tanawade (2011) affirmed that interpersonal skill is wholly applied to internal peer and management relations as well as to user-contact activities.

The findings of this study showed that there is a low negative relationship of -0.10 between work experience and librarians career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The study implies that librarians in south-south, Nigeria have inadequate work experience as this might affect their carrier development. The outcome of this study is contrary to the study conducted by Onifade, Okoro and Boakye (2018) on the work and career progression of experienced librarians in Nigeria and Ghana Universities. The findings revealed that there are no clearly defined continuing education policies for experienced librarians and their carrier in the two countries. On the hypothesis tested it revealed there is a significant relationship existing between work experience of librarians and their career development in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria. In a view of Animasahun and Oludemi (2013) working experience has always been viewed as a predictor of career commitment

Conclusion

This study was conducted to determine how interpersonal skills correlate with career development of librarians'. The present study concludes that interpersonal skill has great influence on librarian's career development and work experience influence career development of librarians positively or negatively. Finally, high possession of interpersonal skills increases librarian's career development significantly in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The library management should engage librarians in a lot of interpersonal skills and communication in the course of their job, during user registration, promotion/marketing of library services and resources, during reference/information services. This will bring drastic changes and positive

impacts both in the library landscape, library services and their carrier development

2. It is essential that university management should train librarians while on the job, and their skills need to be updated through training and developments program, orientation/induction, inventory, conferences, workshops and seminars in order to enhance their interpersonal skills, and research competencies.
3. Library administrators should consider improving librarians' skills by on the job rotation that is, transfer of personnel from one division to another within and outside the library to gain more experience, as this will eradicate all forms of disparity and lack of work experience among librarians.

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Appendix A

Distribution of Librarians according to their Institution

S/No.	Universities	No. of Librarians
1	University of Benin, Benin City	25
2	University of Calabar, Calablar	29
3	University of Uyo, Uyo	25
4	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	21
5	Federal University, Otuoke	10
6	University of Port Harcourt, Port-Harcourt	26
7	Akwa Ibom State University of Technology, Uyo	15
8	Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma	16
9	Cross River State University of Science and Technology, Calabar	13
10	Delta State University, Abraka	16
11	River State University of Science and Technology	11
12	Edo University, Uzairue	3
13	Niger Delta University, Yenogoa	14
14	Igbinedon University, Okada	8

15	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	16
16	Novena University, Ogume	9
17	Obong University, ObongNtak	5
18	Rhema University, Obeama-Asa-Rivers State	6
19	Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa	8
20	Edwin Clark University, Ughelli	4
21	Michael and Cecilia Ibru University, Agbaro-oto	4
22	Wellspring University, Evbuobanosa	3
23	Western Delta University, Oghara	6
24	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt	8
	Total	301

Source: field survey, 2023