

Evaluation of Children Library Staff of Public Libraries in Edo State, Nigeria

Florence Adeola Omoba

Faomoba@Gmail.Com

Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University,
Ile – Ife, Osun State. Nigeria.

Omoba, Rosnold Ogie

Omoba@Rectas.Org

African Regional Institute for Geospatial Information Science and Technology
(Afrigist), Obafemi Awolowo University Campus
Ile – Ife, Osun State. Nigeria.

Abstract

A Library's Success Is Wholly Dependent On Its Staff Members who, while working together, derive pleasure from their work and, more importantly, like interacting with children. The study is a descriptive survey. The population for the study consisted of all the staff and the children that make use of the Public libraries in Edo State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 4 local governments out of 18 local government, while 62 members of staff and 176 children were drawn by accidental sampling out of 124 and 815 registered children respectively in the state. Data for the study were collected using; Questionnaire for Public Library Users (QPLU), Questionnaire for Public Library Staff (QPLS), interview, observation and examination of existing library statistics. The data were analysed using percentages. The study revealed that untrained personnel are more (73%) than the trained personnel; there are more old people that are within the range of 41-60 years (72%) in the libraries; and very few staff development programmes were organised. Based on these findings, the study recommended that seminars and workshops should be organised for members of staff and they should also be sponsored to conferences. The members of staff should be given study leave with or without pay to go for professional courses. More trained staff should be employed and be deployed to all the public libraries in Edo state.

Keywords: Children library, Public library, Public Library Personnel, Children Library personnel

Introduction

The idea of a systematic library service for the Edo State of Nigeria started in 1969, when the then Mid-West State Government invited John and Priscilla Harris to conduct a feasibility study of the state library service within the state. It was on the strength of the recommendations contained in the report of the feasibility study that the then Mid-West State Government promulgated the Mid-West State Library Board edict in 1971.

The edict states in part (paragraph 9) as found in the address delivered by Olubayo in 1981, that it shall be the duty of the board, subject to the provision of this law; To establish and maintain in accordance with this law a state library service within the state, To provide, in accordance with this law, libraries of high standing in the opinion of the board; To be responsible for, and encourage the establishment of libraries and to make available to the various interests and institutions in the state the widest possible range of books and other records of human intellectual endeavor in the arts, science and technology; To operate in



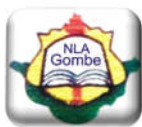
particular, a Public Library division to be responsible for the provision of library services throughout the state.

Public Library is popularly referred to as ‘the people’s university’. McGraw-Hill Dictionary defines Public Library as a library maintained by a municipality or other unit of local government and usually supported at least in part by local taxation that provides books and reference services free to all local residents. Public libraries are established in Nigeria to provide resources and services free of charge to meet the information needs of the citizenry (Okafor, 2020). Public libraries play a major role in helping children to read and in improving literacy skills of children.

Public Libraries, regardless of size will have in addition to the traditional departments of acquisition, technical processing, circulation, references and administration, a department which serves children and young people with collections specially selected for them. The organisation of public libraries varies according to the size of the library; the nature of the community and the needs of the residents, the objectives and purposes of the library; and the availability of physical facilities, staff and financial support (Ternenge & Torkuma, 2021). Public libraries are in a remarkable position to expose children to great number of print and meaningful language opportunities that are crucial to reading achievement. Alberta Municipal Affairs (2017) found that children who had been exposed to a library preschool program showed a greater number of emergent literacy behaviors and pre-reading skills than those in a control group. Summer reading programs seek to attract large numbers of children to the library during the summer, a time when reading skills often decline.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines the child as a person under 18 years of age and these Guidelines specifically relate to the target age between 0 – 18 years. This includes services and resources for babies and toddlers, children and young adults (IFLA, 2018). Goals of establishing children library according to Rankin (2018) in the work edited for IFLA, are; To facilitate the right of every child to information, literacy, cultural development, lifelong learning and creative programmes in leisure time; To provide children with access to a wide range of appropriate resources and media; To help children develop digital media information literacy skills; To provide cultural and recreational programmes, oriented towards reading and literacy; To provide various activities for children, parents and caregivers; To address barriers for children and to advocate for their freedom and safety; To encourage children to become confident and competent individuals and citizens; and To facilitate community partnerships so that programmes and services could be provided to all children and their families in the community, including those on the margins of the dominant group, who may be economically disadvantaged.

Takeuchi & Sobel (2020) submitted that free and varied activities in children's libraries require modern approaches, such as small-group activities, work in pairs, role-playing, guided fantasies, discussions, team and co-operative work, etc. Such methods and strategies help children acquire knowledge and skills for free and non-confrontational communication and co-operation. Children's libraries could be an important factor in the development of democracy in a society by empowering children for active participation. Through early access to information and books, creative contacts with peers and pursuing interests in the library, the child learns how to live with others, how to protect their own rights while respecting the rights of others.



Children's libraries promote the rights of a child through different activities designed for children. Activities for children include exhibitions, promotions of books and other media dealing with the rights of the child, workshops, reading and literacy sessions/programmes and other leisure time activities. Children's libraries should be the place where children meet and communicate freely, where they develop their potential creatively and where they learn, apply and expand their rights and responsibilities (Takeuchi, Vaala, & Ahn, 2019)

Children's library therefore, is expected to serve all individuals, which means there no age which is too young to be a library user. Users that come into the children's library, either as individuals or in groups are babies/toddlers, pre-school children, elementary/primary school children (age 5-10), "older" children (age 11 - 14), young people with reading, learning and developmental difficulties, parents and other adults working with books / media and children and families (IFLA, 2003).

Children's librarian is the advocate of children in the library, the child is the focus of all her activities. Using the submission of Libraries for Children and Young Adults IFLA Section as the standard for what a children Librarian ought to be, therefore, in order to have committed trained professional children's librarians, there must be education and training in all areas of the service. IFLA supports efforts to organise basic and continuing courses in library services for children and young adults. Children's librarianship should be part of the curriculum of any public library education programme.

A library's success is wholly dependent on its staff members who, while working together, derive pleasure from their work and, more importantly, like interacting with children. It is important that the staff members work cooperatively; their roles need to blend in harmony in order for the numerous tasks of the library to be accomplished. Everyone should be encouraged to take ownership for having an organized, well-attended and attractive library and surrounding compound (Levay, Volmert & Kendall-Taylor, 2018).

Library staff goes a long way to affect the quality of services given to children. For qualitative service to be given in the public library, the library personnel are to: Be skilled communication leaders, able to guide without rancour, to interpret needs and programs; Know and understand learning patterns and the curriculum, its structure, as well as its content; Know as much about other media of communication as is traditionally known about books; what each medium is, what its purpose is, what each does; Have a vocabulary to express their knowledge and to know enough about the machines not to be afraid of them; know and understand the principles of organisation and administration and to make intelligent application of these principles; Be able to plan quarters for instructional materials centres and to plan them in relation to other facilities in the school and to the progress of the school; recognise and accept the functional and harmonious relationship between departmentalization and centralization of materials; and Know specialists in all related fields that can be called upon for assistance and advice (Takeuchi & Sobel, 2020). In order for children to have interest in the resources and services of Libraries, the members of staff need to be well equipped academically and professionally.

Statement of the Problem

Attention is not given to the children section of public library as it is supposed to be given. Many library staff are not trained before or on the job as children library staff. Therefore, children library are not properly organised which could go a long way to affect the efficient use of the library by children. Many of them are posted to children library because they are old and not because they are trained. Effective, efficient and sufficient staff will help to motivate children using their skills to organise activities that will enhance the constant use of the library



by children. The state (age, academic and professional) of Children Librarians in the Public Libraries will either promote or otherwise the effective use of the libraries by children.

Purpose of the Study

The study evaluates the staff's strength and their qualification in Edo state Public library and a particular attention was made on the children section. The objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the demographic characteristics of members of staff of Edo State Public Libraries.
2. To evaluate the quality of staff in the children's section of Edo State Public Libraries.
3. To assess the staff's strength in the children section of Edo State Public Libraries.

Research Questions

1. What are demographic characteristics of members of staff of Edo state public libraries?
2. What is the worth of staff in the children section of Edo state public libraries?
3. What is the staff strength in the children section of Edo state public libraries?

Methodology

Study design

Descriptive survey design is also considered as the best purposed- based survey design for the research.

Study population

The study population is made up of 815 registered children in Edo State public libraries and 124 members of staff of the same libraries (according to the record of the Deputy Director Reader Service of Edo State Public Library). The study covers the primary school children or children within the age of 5 and 14 years that uses the Public Libraries.

Sample and sampling technique

There was no sampling method adopted for the staff. All the staff members were involved in their various libraries. Accidental sampling was used for the children. In accidental sampling, only the children that the researcher could reach as at the time of the study were made use of. In this research, all the children within the specified age that came to make use of the library were interviewed within the period of one month, in which two weeks were in the holiday and two weeks were in the school's session.

The area of study is Edo state. It has 18 local government council areas. The geographical division of Edo state was considered for the sampling technique. The headquarter was chosen, and then a local government area was selected at random without replacement from each of the geographical division of Edo State. The geographical divisions are Edo North, Edo South and Edo Central. In Edo North, Akoko-Edo was selected, in Edo South and Central, Egor and Owan East were selected respectively. All the public libraries found in each of the local governments selected were used for the research.

Instrument of Data Collection

Four approaches were combined in the study; questionnaire, interview, personal observation and examination of existing library statistics.

Questionnaire: Questionnaire for the Public Library Users (QPLU) consists of sections A and B. Section A consists of the bio data and the experience of the children in the library, namely; age, class, library interest, distance covered to get to the library, loaning activities, special programmes attended in the library. Section B has 13 items consisting of the level at which the Public Library satisfies the resource needs of users. Questionnaire for Public Library Staff



(QPLS) has 3 sections; section A consists of bio data of the respondent namely; sex, age, qualification, library experience, children library experience and training experience. Sections B and C consist of the resource needs of users and resources provided respectively.

Interview: Questionnaire for the Public Library Users (QPLU) was used to interview children that could not read.

Personal observation: the researcher went round the sampled libraries to see if the resources were really put in place.

Examination of existing library statistics: A form was drawn by the researcher for the head in each of the library to fill. This revealed the total library holdings in the children section, other resources available, the percentage of the budget that goes for resources and the staff strength.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The face and content validity were verified by some lecturers from the Departments of Educational Management and Library Studies both at the University of Ibadan. The instrument was subjected to test re-test method using the children in Oyo State Public Library at Dugbe in Ibadan. The questionnaire was administered to the same respondents at two weeks interval. The data for all the research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage). The final instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.84 for QPLS and 0.82 for QPLU.

Administration of Instrument

A total of 65 copies of the Questionnaire for Public Library Staff (QPLS) were administered while 62 copies were correctly completed, 200 copies of Questionnaire for Public Library Users (QPLU) were administered while 176 were correctly completed; and a form for library head was also filled by all the library heads in the following libraries used; Headquarter, Egor, Owan-East and Akoko-Edo (Igarra, Ibillo and Ekpe)

Methods of Data Analysis

The data analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically, percentages and tables were used to answer the research questions.

Discussion and Conclusion

Research question one

What are demographic characteristics of members of staff of Edo state public libraries?

Table 1: the age of the members of staff of Edo State Public Libraries.

Age	Frequency	%
21-30 years	1	2
31-40 years	16	26
41-50 years	30	48
51-60 years	15	24
Total	62	100

There is only one person within the age range of 21-30 years (2%), 26% of the members of staff are within the range of 31-40 years, and while 41-50 years are 48% and 24% are 51-60 years. The highest percentage goes for the age range of 41-50 years which may fill reluctant to improve themselves, because of their closeness to the retirement age of Edo State.



Table 2: the qualification of the members of staff of Edo State Public Libraries.

Qualification	Frequency	%
Primary	16	26
SSCE/TC II/Dip	41	66
B.Sc./HND	2	3
MLS/PhD	3	5
Total	62	100

Table 2 shows that primary school certificate holders are 26%, the SSCE/TCII/Diploma holders are 66%, those that have B. SC. /HND are 3% while the members of staff that have MLS/P.HD are 5%. The members of staff with lower qualifications are more (92%) than those with higher qualifications. From observation made, the 5 people that have higher degrees are in the headquarters. While some with Diploma certificate are heading libraries outside the headquarter.

Table 3; the library experience of the members of staff of Edo State Public Libraries.

Library Experience	Frequency	%
None	-	-
1-5 years	-	-
6-10 years	5	9
11-15 years	2	3
15 and above	55	88
Total	62	100

Table 3 shows that members of staff of the library are with at least 6 years library experience. The members of staff with 6-10 years are 9%, those with 11-15 years are 3%, and while those with 15 years and above are 88%. The members of staff with library experience above 15 years have the highest percentage (88%). This implies that employment of staff was done a long time ago, because only 9% have 6-10 years library experience.

Table 4: experience of the members of staff of Edo State Public Libraries in the children library.

Children Library Experience	Frequency	%
None	29	46
1-5 years	17	27
6-10 years	4	6
11-15 years	2	3
above 15 years	10	16
Total	62	100

The people that has no children library are 46%, those that have between 1-5years are 27%, those that have 6-10years experience are 6% , the people with 11-15years library experience are 3% and those that have experience above 15years are 16%. From my observation, just any member of is sent to the children library, because as at the time of the research the record says there are 7 children librarians in the whole state.

Table 5: Children service training attended of the members of staff of Edo State Public Libraries.

Children service training attended	Frequency	%
None	54	86
Once	-	-
Twice	8	14
Trice	-	-
Above trice	-	-
Total	62	100



Table 5 shows that the people that have no children service training are 86% and those that attended children service training are 14%. The children service training was attended by 14% of staff. This is in line with the record of the library, because there are only 7 children librarians in the whole state.

Research Question two

What is the quality of staff in the children section of Edo State Public Libraries?

Table 6 is the breakdown of the qualification of all the members of staff in Edo State Public Libraries.

Table 6: Staff Qualification

S/N	Qualification	Freq	%
1	First School Leaving Certificate	79	64
2	WASC/SSCE	11	9
3	Certificate in Library Studies	-	-
4	Diploma in Library Studies	29	23
5	Fist Degree/HND in Library Studies	3	2
6	Masters degree in library studies	2	2
7	PhD in Library Studies	-	-
	Total	124	100

There are 124 staff in number with 79 (64%) having first school leaving certificate, 11 (8.9%) have WASC/SSCE, 29 (23%) have diploma, 3(2%) have BLS and 2(2%) have MLS. From table 6 it is observed that untrained personnel have higher percentage (73%) than the trained personnel (27%). From the observation made, the trained personnel are the administrative staff and they are mostly at the headquarter. They don't also have personal contact with the users. Only few of the diploma holders are posted to out-stations. Most of the heads have first school leaving certificate and only very few have diploma in library studies. Table 6 implies that the quality of the staff of public library in Edo state is very poor.

Table 7: Children Library Staff Qualification

S/N	Item	Frequency
1	First School Leaving Certificate	3
2	WASC/SSCE	2
3	Certificate in Library Studies	-
4	Diploma in Library Studies	2
5	Fist Degree/HND in Library Studies	-
6	Masters degree in library studies	-
7	PhD in Library Studies	-
	Total	7

Considering the quantity of staff, there are 124 staff, and we have only seven (5%) staff for children. Three have first school leaving certificate, two have WASC/SSCE and 2 have diploma in library studies. This implies that not all libraries have a children Librarian being that there are 22 branch libraries all over the state. Although all the libraries visited has children librarian.



Table 8: Staff Quality

Table 8; shows the quality of staff which is measured by the training attended.

Items	agree		disagree	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
The staff of children section of the library are well trained for their job	57	91	5	9
We are exposed to modern ways of managing children library resources	57	91	5	9
I benefit from workshop from time to time	21	34	41	66
Seminars are always organized to enrich our knowledge	20	32	42	68
I have a formal training in the management of children library resources and services	20	32	42	68
I render my service in an efficient manner	41	66	21	34

From table 8, 91% of the members of staff agreed while 9% disagreed that the staff of the children section of the library is well trained for their job. 91% of them also agreed while 9% disagreed that they are exposed to modern ways of managing children library resources, 34% agreed while 66% disagreed that they benefit from workshop from time to time, 32% agreed while 68% disagreed that seminars are always organized to enrich their knowledge, 32% agreed while 68% disagreed that they have a formal training in the management of children library resources and services and 66% agreed while 34% disagreed that they render their services in an efficient manner. Table 8 shows that the members of staff are hardworking equipped with modern day technology, but they are not sent on training, they only make use of their head knowledge.

Research question three

What is the staff strength in the children section of Edo state public libraries?

Table 9: Staff population

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	There are enough staff for the children section	11	18	51	82
2	Professionals are available for the services	27	43	35	57
3	Casual workers are used whenever there is shortage of staff	15	24	47	76

Table 9 shows that 18% agreed while 82% disagreed that there are enough members of staff or the children section, 43% agreed while 57% disagreed that professionals are available for the services and 24% agreed while 76% disagreed that casual workers are used whenever there is shortage of staff. The percentage of those that disagreed that there are enough members staff are more (82%) than those that agreed on enough staff. There are no enough professionals (57%) and no casual staff employed is 76%.

Conclusion

The staff strength of the library in the whole of Edo state is poor and that affects the children library. No training is organized for the staff of children library, staff with higher educational qualification are posted to the headquarters. All the parameters used to measure the staff of children library are very far from what the standard of IFLA proposed. The Edo state public library has very few and untrained personnel in their children library.



There is a popular saying that when you train a child you have trained a generation and when you train an adult you have trained an individual. Since there are no enough/qualified hands to train this children on the use of the library or personal reading, they will easily think of the short cut to success during any exam. The undergraduates' poor attitude to the use of library can also be linked to their attitude from childhood. They only come to the library to write assignment or to read for exam if every other space out there is filled up.

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