

LIBRARIANS' MENTORING AND QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined librarians' mentoring relationship with quality service delivery in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. One research question was raised and a null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study consisted 107 Librarians in seven federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The entire population was used for the study because the population was small and manageable. A researcher-developed instrument titled "Librarians' Mentoring and Quality Service Delivery Questionnaire (LMQSDQ)" was used for data collection and was face-validated by experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined by Cronbach Alpha statistics which yielded a reliability coefficient of .84. The instrument was administered to the respondents and the data obtained were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research question and simple linear regression was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed a very weak positive and no significant relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The study therefore concluded that mentoring is a necessity among librarians and recommended that less experienced librarians should subject themselves to mentoring.

Keynotes: Librarians' Mentoring, Service Delivery, Federal University Libraries, Nigeria.

Introduction

Mentoring is a process in which seasoned individuals serve as counsellors, offering career advice and psychological support to assist their protégés grow both personally and professionally (Adetayo *et al.*, 2023). Mentoring serves as a channel for advice, training feedback, and community exposure (Yang *et al.*, 2016). Conversely, Snoeren *et al.* (2016) saw it as a personal, dynamic, reciprocal connection. However, Scully *et al.* (2018) said that the mentor helps the mentee understand the function of organisational life by acting as a guide. A more detailed definition of mentoring might be defined as a personal, reciprocal connection in which an experienced individual acts as a mentor, role model, teacher, and supporter. It is the mentor's responsibility to guide and advise the mentee towards a certain standard of professionalism. In light of this, Ajayi *et al.* (2021) maintained that it might be difficult to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for a certain job. It is made worse in the lack of a sufficient support system, which is why mentorship is necessary.

A one-to-one connection between an older person (mentor, librarian) and a younger person (mentee or protégé, young librarian) is the classic definition of mentoring. Yusuf (2011) opined that mentoring is a helpful one-on-one interaction that aims to encourage the aspirant's progress between an experienced person and an aspiring person. A novice and an accomplished, successful, mid-career employee have a supportive relationship. During a mentoring relationship, knowledge and contacts are shared to accelerate upward mobility. A young librarian, known as a mentee, receives guidance from an experienced librarian, known as a mentor, on how to grow professionally and accomplish their objectives. Mentoring is a

relationship-based approach to learning and growth (Nwabueze & Anike, 2016). Mentoring aims to increase the likelihood of accomplishing objectives. The mentor's job is to impart information, wisdom, and discernment while also offering direction and assistance. Additionally, mentoring may provide psychological support for adjustments in goals, attitudes, and behaviour. A mentorship connection is essential for one's career advancement.

Through mentoring, mentees may enhance certain professional areas, discover unrealized potential in growth areas, and, if they are newly employed, get acquainted with the company. According to Bello and Mansor (2018), mentoring has been shown to challenge mentees' perspectives, heighten self-awareness, and enhance mentees' capacity to build connections that uphold and foster an independent and self-assured attitude. Mentoring falls into two categories: psychological help and career support.

Career Support: Career support offers career-related services to improve skills and professionalism to support the mentee's professional requirements. Mentors assist mentees in learning how to carry out their responsibilities correctly and become ready for advancement within a business.

Psychological Assistance: The mentee's perception of psychological stability is aided by psychological support. Psychological activities provide social or psychological assistance, or both, to meet the mentee's requirements. The interpersonal connection between the mentor and protégé is linked to psychological support, which encompasses companionship, role modelling, affirmation, acceptance, and counselling (Kao *et al.*, 2014).

A mentoring relationship, according to Yusuf (2011), enables new employees to witness unit and organisational activities, objectives, functions, rules, and procedures. The process of entering into a mentor-mentee relationship is referred to as:

- (i) Initiation, which is when the mentor and mentee choose each other and start getting to know each other's habits and styles.
- (ii) Cultivation, which results in an increase in mentoring behaviours and the development of a strong relationship between mentor and mentee.
- (iii) Redefinition, which happens when the mentoring relationship shifts to something that more closely resembles a peer relationship.
- (iv) Separation, which is when the mentoring relationship ends, usually due to geographical distance.

As a result, a mentor's job is to help and guide the person they are mentoring, as well as to foster a connection that is both supportive and growth-oriented. According to Odusanya and Amusa in Ubogu (2019), mentoring connections in academia may be formal (a relationship that is officially allocated) or informal (one that develops on its own between partners). Idoko *et al.* (2016), asserted that an institution cannot remain if its more seasoned members do not impart to their younger counterparts the knowledge they have accumulated over the years. A key component of librarians' professional development and success is mentoring. For the sake of this research, mentorship is defined as a relationship in which two individuals are assisted in reaching maturity by a more knowledgeable person. Recent research and mentoring programmes have made mentoring more flexible as a continuous professional development activity. Every librarian plays a vital part in achieving the aims and objectives of the group organisation. Every librarian, from the chief librarian to the least, has a distinct job to do. The professional competence and performance of each individual determines the degree to which

the collective aim is accomplished. They need methodical professional growth specifically for this reason, equipping themselves with the abilities required to do their jobs in the information era. Mentoring is a beneficial means of doing this (Ozioko *et al.*, 2012).

Mentoring is a mutually beneficial learning partnership that utilises the expertise and experience of appropriately qualified professionals. Career and psychological development are the two overarching aims of mentoring, with the people engaged deciding on the relationship's particular objectives. Mentoring relationships are characterised by a progression of developmental phases and include more than a fleeting or infrequent show of interest on the side of the mentor towards the mentee (Ritchie and Genoni in Ubogu, 2019). According to Ugwuanyi and Ejikeme (2011), in order to avoid professional alienation in their work and to adapt to the culture and change that are present in the modern information environment, librarians must constantly study, update, and refresh their expertise. Idoko *et al.* (2016), stated that mentoring offers the institutional and cultural framework necessary for ongoing professional growth to take place in a variety of forms, such as:

- i. It upgrades an individual's education, bringing it up to date with those currently obtaining a similar degree or certificate.
- ii. It permits branching out into uncharted territory within a field.
- iii. It makes the fundamental premise that each person is in-charge of their personal growth.
- iv. It includes educational activities deemed above and above what is thought to be required for entry into the profession.

Different sorts of library organisations provide a variety of mentorship initiatives, which may take on different forms based on their structure, purpose, and content. These programmes were divided into two categories by Sodipe and Madukoma (2013), the traditional type, which is informal in nature, and the formal mentoring, which may take on many forms including peer, group, and electronic mentoring. There are several reasons why mentorship initiatives are important, and they include:

- i. Creation of educational opportunities.
- ii. Self-assurance and risk-taking propensity.
- iii. Ability to tolerate criticism
- iv. Acceleration of professional progress.

According to Ekechukwu and Horsfall (2015), mentoring in academic libraries may improve a person's dedication to the team, provide them with more understanding of how the library operates, and foster better communication inside the library. Additionally, it raises performance success levels provides an opportunity for networking with other members of the library network, and helps to build organisational culture. However, without mentoring assessment and feedback, mentoring is incomplete. In every learning process, including mentoring, feedback is crucial. Giving feedback, however, is insufficient; mentors must also assess and gauge how their mentees' responses to it have improved their performance at work (Njoku, 2017).

Over the years, academic mentoring has become more widespread and is regularly used as an outreach strategy at majority of colleges and universities. Libraries make considerable use of academic mentorship for several reasons. A mentoring relationship may be regarded from a variety of angles. In addition to the young librarian's potential benefits, the experienced librarian's professional growth must also be taken into account (Ekechukwu & Horsfall, 2015).

Nwankwo *et al.* (2017) asserted that the South Eastern Library Association explained that mentorship relationships are often promoted as a way to introduce and support librarians and other library staff in their collaborative efforts. Additionally, it offers succession planning, boosts learning about the field and networking opportunities, and increases employee motivation. With the help of seasoned experts, it is designed to help librarians and library professionals of all levels learn, grow, and realise their own potential. As a result, new librarians do enter the field as beginners in the fields of academic research and publication, keeping in mind the ongoing needs and requirements of their line of work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

What is the relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The Human Capital Theory by Schultz (1961)

The Human Capital Theory forms the basis of this investigation. In his seminal work on the economics of employer-provided training, Nobel Prize-winning economist Gary S. Becker improved upon Schultz's 1961 hypothesis. According to the hypothesis, workers who get education or training gain practical knowledge and abilities that increase their productivity and earning potential. The notion focuses on the abilities, know-how, and character attributes that employees contribute to produce profits for the company or organisation and themselves. This theory's central tenet is the belief that investing in human capital—whether via education, training, or medical care can increase productivity since the output wholly is greatly impacted by the return on one's acquired human capital. Investment in human capital is thus a means of achieving further gains in productivity.

According to the notion, one of the key elements that gives them a competitive edge is a highly educated labour force. Accordingly, funding for the development of human capital via official and informal education and training programmes boosts economic productivity and expands the window of opportunity for enhancing innovation and competitiveness. The premise is that financial investments in people ought to provide profits. Thus, it is believed that investing in education and training is the most crucial way to develop human capital. This is due to the fact that education helps the economy in a number of ways, such as via fostering the development of talent, improving people's capacity to adapt to changing circumstances, preparing future educators, and providing labour for long-term economic growth.

This idea is pertinent to the task at hand because it explains how providing employees with proper training opportunities may boost their output or performance on the job. In light of this, library employees who are monitored will enable them to provide services that are both effective and efficient. They will do better at work as a consequence of this.

SERVQUAL Model by Zeithaml *et al.* (1988).

Berry, Zeithaml, and Parasuraman created the Service Quality (SERQUAL) model in 1988. An organisation providing services may use SERVQUAL, a derived approach, to raise the quality of their offerings. Consumer opinions about the relative significance of service qualities are taken into consideration by SERVQUAL. To enhance the most important service features, an organisation might use its resources and set priorities in this way. According to the idea, the difference between a customer's expectations and their perceptions of the service they got determines the quality of the service. Therefore, respondents must provide information regarding both of these views.

Serving retail enterprises, SERVQUAL is a multi-item measure designed to gauge how satisfied customers are with the quality of service provided. Five constructs were identified by the scale as they break down the concept of service quality:

- i. Dependability: The capacity to provide accurate and consistent service.
- ii. Assurance: An employee's capacity to instill trust and confidence.
- iii. Tangibles: actual buildings, furnishings, tools, personnel demeanour, etc.
- iv. Empathy: How much considerate, customised assistance is provided.
- v. Response: The ability and willingness to assist in meeting the needs of the consumer.

The SERVQUAL model is deemed appropriate for this research as academic libraries always strive to consistently provide services using its components. The aforementioned components are linked to this study as they will aid academic libraries in enhancing their offerings via ongoing improvement initiatives.

Review of Related Literature

Ubogu (2019) studied mentorship for academic librarians' professional growth in university libraries in Nigeria. 250 professional librarians from university libraries in Nigeria were surveyed for the research. A questionnaire was used to gather information from the participants. The replies' percentages were totalled. The results demonstrated that individual mentoring and conference, seminar, and workshop sponsorship are the two main types of mentoring programmes used to train librarians. Academic librarians benefit from mentoring because it prepares aspiring librarians for the more difficult work that lies ahead. Using this chance, mentors progressively transfer control to younger librarians. The research also showed that the two main issues with academic librarian mentoring in Nigerian university libraries are the absence of resources necessary for mentorship and a lack of knowledge about the importance of mentoring subordinates.

Another study by Fasola and Mamudu (2020) on mentorship as a means of enhancing librarians' ability at private universities located in South-West Nigeria aimed to identify various mentoring strategies used for librarian capacity building, ascertain the value of mentorship among librarians, identify obstacles to successful mentorship among librarians, and identify various approaches to surmount mentoring obstacles among South-West Nigerian private university librarians. The study's findings unequivocally demonstrated that one tactic employed to increase librarians' ability at the private colleges under investigation is mentorship. The results of the study indicated that the most common mentoring strategies used by librarians in private university libraries included matching more experienced librarians with less experienced ones, exchanging professional ideas, and mentoring through professional forums like the online forum of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), LinkedIn, and other professional listservs. The results also showed that two of the most common mentoring

approaches for developing the ability of librarians at private institutions in Nigeria were individual mentoring and role modelling.

In a related study in southern Nigeria, Adetayo *et al.* (2023) investigated mentorship assistance for librarians' research productivity via a survey of the volume of publications in reputable journals and internet channels. The study looked at how mentorship assistance affected librarians' research output in southwestern Nigerian institutions and the findings showed that the number of publications made by librarians in their field of expertise was quite high, while their publications in online journals and Scopus/WoS were found to be low. It was discovered that mentoring for librarians was a combination of formal and informal, with informal mentorship being more common than formal mentorship. Research indicates that among librarians, psychological assistance is more common than career support. More so, career support had a major positive impact on librarians' research productivity.

Nwabueze and Anike (2016) studied mentorship programmes utilised in Southeast federal university libraries to help librarians advance their careers. For this investigation, a descriptive survey approach was used. The study concluded that informal mentoring is the primary method used by librarians for their professional development (mean scores of 3.71, 3.57, and 3.12); the only programmes through which librarians receive mentoring are membership in professional associations and sponsorship of conferences and seminars (mean scores of 3.45 and 3.30); librarians strongly expressed the advantages of mentoring (mean scores between 3.51 and 3.43); the obstacles to effective mentoring among librarians include unhelpful criticism given by the mentor to the mentee, breaches of confidentiality by both the mentor and the mentee, and the lack of mentoring orientation in librarianship (mean scores of 3.30, 3.24, and 3.16); and some recommendations for overcoming these obstacles.

A similar study was carried out by Ossai-Ugbah and Akporhonor (2023) at mentorship as a relationship between librarian productivity in South-West Nigerian universities. The results demonstrated that professional advancement, role modelling, and psychological support are all highly facilitated by mentoring among librarians at South-West institutions. The productivity of librarians at South-West Nigerian institutions did not significantly correlate with mentorship.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational survey design. The population of this study was 107 librarians from seven federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The entire population was used as the sample for the study purposively. A face-validated researcher-structured questionnaire titled "Librarians' Mentoring and Quality Service Delivery Questionnaire (LMQSDQ)", was used to gather data. Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to determine a reliability coefficient of .84 indicating that the instrument was reliable. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents at their Out of 107 copies of the questionnaire administered, 100 copies were returned and deemed useful for data analysis. This indicated a (94%) rate of return. Data derived from the administered copies of the questionnaire were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and Simple Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

What is the relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) for the relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery (N-100)

Variables	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r	Remark
Mentoring	3513	128111			Very weak positive relationship
Quality service delivery	4342	191060	152984	0.130	

Table 1 shows the summary of the PPMC test for relationship. The result established the calculated r-value to be 0.130, indicating a very weak positive relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery. This shows that librarians' mentoring has a very weak positive relationship with quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

There is no significant relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 2: Summary of Regression analysis on the relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
1	Regression	43.003	1	43.003	1.694	.196*	Not significant
	Residual	2487.357	98	25.381			
	Total	2530.360	99				

*Not significant @ $p > .05$.196 alpha level

Table 2 shows the summary of the regression test for significant relationship. The result shows that the calculated f-ratio is 1.694. The probability value is .196. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha level ($p > .05$.196), the result is statistically not significant and the null hypothesis is retained. Thus, there is no significant relationship between librarians' mentoring and quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

The result established a very weak positive and a no significant relationship between librarians' mentorship and quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This shows that librarians' development through mentoring has a very weak positive relationship with quality service delivery in Federal University libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Bamidele *et al.* (2013) finding that library assistants were not given adequate training. However, training improves the skills of librarians and enhances quality service delivery. The finding is also in tandem with Ubogu (2019) whose study revealed that mentoring programmes through which librarians are mostly mentored are sponsorship to conferences, seminars and workshops and individual mentoring.

This is an indicator that mentorship is a systematic process of building a leadership pipeline and transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes from senior colleagues to younger professionals is fast fading away. In corroboration, Fasola *et al.* (2020) study clearly showed that mentoring is a strategy used for capacity building of librarians in the private universities studied and that individual mentoring and role modeling were two of the prevailing forms of mentoring strategies available for capacity building of librarians in private universities in Nigeria.

Adetayo *et al* (2023) study revealed that the amount of publications made by librarians in their field of expertise was quite high, while their publications in online journals and Scopus/WoS were found to be low. This implies that mentoring goes a long way to enhance librarians' performance, hence quality service delivery. Also in agreement is the finding of Nwabueze and Anike (2016) that the obstacles to effective mentoring among librarians include unhelpful criticism given by the mentor to the mentee, breaches of confidentiality by both the mentor and the mentee, and the lack of mentoring orientation in librarianship. This is an indication that non availability of facilities required for the mentorship and lack of awareness on the need to mentor subordinates are the major problems associated with mentoring of academic librarians in Nigerian university libraries.

Conclusion

Mentoring is very important in any workplace, therefore is a need for experienced librarians to mentor the less experienced librarians and more so the less experienced librarians must subject themselves to mentorship so that they would not be found wanting in the course of carrying out their duties and to remain relevant in the organization.

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