



Research Paper

Influence Of Professional Development on Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of professional development on librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. This study was guided by two research questions and one hypothesis. A review of related literature was conducted in line with the study's objectives. The study adopted a correlational research design with a population of 295 librarians, all of whom constituted the study sample using the total enumeration (census) technique. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire titled *Influence of Professional Development on Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery in University Libraries Questionnaire (IPDLCSDQ)* and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, mean (with criterion mean set at 3.00), and standard deviation, and inferential statistics, including simple linear regression at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria possess a high level of competencies in service delivery and demonstrate a high extent of professional development. Specifically, competencies include information search and retrieval, ICT usage, user education, and communication skills, and the major professional development includes continuing education, on-the-job training, and participation in workshops and research. There is a significant positive relationship between professional development and librarians' competencies in service delivery, with professional development explaining 32.8% of the variance in competencies. It was concluded that continuous professional development significantly enhanced librarians' competencies and improved the quality of library service delivery. The study recommended that the university's library management should organise regular training as well as mentorship support for the librarians.

Keywords: Continuing education, ICT skills, Librarians' competencies, Library management, Mentorship, Professional development, Service delivery, University libraries

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I. Introduction

Higher education can not be done without university libraries because they contribute to teaching, learning, and research through timely and relevant information (University of Potomac, 2020). Their performance is determined by the quality-of-service provision and this defines their reputation (Oden & Owolabi, 2021:17-18; Urhefe-Okotie, 2023:3). Libraries are usually divided into technical, readers, and electronic services (which include) (Akintola, 2021:27) and the librarians do the major roles of cataloguing, circulation, user education, and management of digital resources (Iqbal & Khan, 2017:13). Nevertheless, the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has changed the position of librarians as the book custodians into the digital information managers (Akintola, 2021:45).

Skill is key to quality service provision. According to Ogbnonnaya (2019:129), it is the knowledge, skills, and abilities to help in successful service, and, according to Ross, ICT, resource management, and

communication skills. According to Mahmood (2003, as cited in Atte and Gbaje, 2016), librarians currently require new competencies to address the requirements of the digital era. According to Atta and Gbaje (2016:18), they were divided into professional competencies, namely, technical and managerial ones, and personal ones, namely, communication, adaptability, and lifelong learning. ICT literacy, networking, and transferable skills were also mentioned by Hundo (2020), Okore (2005, as cited in Hundo, 2020:27), and Ayo-Olafare (2016:12) as vital qualities of 21st-century librarians.

The competencies are reinforced by professional development. Anene and Idiedo (2021) explained it as education and training needed to have a successful career, whereas Antley (2022) considered it lifelong learning to remain up to date. Monteiro et al. (2017) perceived it as both formal and informal lifelong learning. Professional development makes librarians more efficient (Huffstetler, 2020, as cited in Ajayi et al., 2024:2), facilitates information access and retrieval (Okonkwo & Anaenobi, 2020:3), and eliminates gaps that formal education leaves unaddressed in the context of technological change (Yandayat, 2018). The most common ones are mentoring, workshops, seminars, and higher degree programmes (Okonkwo & Anaehobi, 2020), which, with the institutional support, increase confidence, modernize skills, and improve service delivery (Huffstetler, 2020; Adamu et al., 2021). Conclusively, consistent professional development is crucial in enhancing the competencies of librarians and quality service delivery in the ICT-based academic setting.

Statement of the Problem

In university libraries, understanding the relationship between professional development and librarians' competencies in service delivery is crucial for effective information dissemination and knowledge management. Librarians' competencies, encompassing skills such as information instruction, collection development, reference services, and resource management, are essential for meeting users' evolving information needs. To maintain high service standards, librarians must continually update their knowledge and adapt to emerging trends in information services. Rapid technological advancements have significantly transformed the information environment, demanding new competencies from library professionals. However, in many university libraries in South-South Nigeria, librarians are struggling to adapt to these changes, which affects the quality and efficiency of service delivery. Evidence from user feedback, service usage, and technology adoption suggests a decline in service effectiveness linked to insufficient professional development.

The problem of limited professional development opportunities has restricted librarians' ability to acquire modern skills necessary for effective service delivery. Without continuous training, workshops, mentoring, and exposure to technological innovations, librarians may lack the competencies required to manage digital resources, provide user-centered services, and utilize modern information systems. Therefore, this study examined the influence of professional development on librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the influence of professional development on librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The specific purposes are to:

1. explore the extent of librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria; and
2. examine the extent of professional development of librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?
2. What is the extent of professional development of librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Hypothesis

This hypothesis was formulated and tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between professional development and librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

II. Literature Review

Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery in Libraries

University libraries play a crucial part in higher education as knowledge hubs in the support of teaching, learning, and research (Tom-George, 2022; Unegbu et al., 2023). The librarians offer traditional and digital services, including reference support, user training, and management of electronic resources, to achieve successful access to information (Ali, 2021). They all consist of circulation, cataloguing, inter-library loan,

current awareness services (CAS), and selective dissemination of information (SDI) as their core functions, and the quality of the services differs depending on the competence and technological capacity of the staff (Adams, 2024; Ikonne et al., 2023). The role of librarians has changed, and nowadays they are not just the keepers of books, but so-called knowledge navigators who work with both physical and virtual collections because of the use of digital technologies (Nwankwo, 2020). Most library processes are currently supported by ICT, being cataloguing, digitization, and user education, which requires ongoing skill development (Adegboire & Tella, 2025; Owolabi et al., 2024). The essential skills that are needed in contemporary librarianship are database management, web searching, library software use, such as KOHA, digitization, and web designing (Idhalama & Egbunu, 2024). Professional development is thus a frequent requirement to be able to handle digital content (Marques Chaica, 2024).

The librarian role as an active service is identified as an empirical fact. Ilesanmi (2023) discovered that tasks like lending and reference services are done in the day-to-day life, and Adegboire and Tella (2025) indicated SDI and reference services as the most common. Librarians maintained service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was delivered through virtual platforms (Alabi & Sani, 2022). Despite the demonstrated competence of librarians in terms of computer use, a mastery of the Internet, and communication (Chaica, 2024; Manzo, 2022), problems with automation and managing a repository have not been resolved yet, despite the lack of institutional support (Marques Chaica, 2024; Idhalama et al., 2020). In general, the librarians in Nigerian universities have solid foundational and digital competencies and need to be trained regularly to ensure that the services can be offered on a global level (Mahdi & Gahsua, 2024). The successful provision of library services is currently pegged on the need to combine both traditional skills with digital and interpersonal skills. Continuous professional renewal is important in ensuring user-centred, technologically oriented, and real-world library services in a fast-evolving information world (Rabasa & Abrizah, 2022; Owolabi et al., 2024).

Professional Development among Librarians in Libraries

With the technological evolution, shifting information sources, and shifting user expectations, professional development is a necessary issue in the library profession, which is rapidly changing (Edet & Alex-Nmecha, 2023). To be able to deliver the services effectively, librarians have to constantly improve their expertise to address the requirements of the digital era. The ongoing professional development (CPD) helps librarians to be flexible and responsive to new challenges, as well as adapt to the ever-changing technological environment (Ajayi et al., 2024; Ebong et al., 2022). With the increased use of digital technologies in libraries, the role of librarians has been transformed to that of information managers who are no longer the custodians of information but have been reduced to activists who need to keep up with current knowledge to ensure that their skills and competencies remain relevant (Owolabi et al., 2024).

The workshops, conferences, training courses, and higher education programs are the activities of professional development essential to maximize the competencies of librarians, enhance their flexibility, and quality of the provided services (Anwar et al., 2021). Research indicates that highly trained employees will make a big difference in enhancing the operations of the library and patronage (Chinyere et al., 2024). Nonetheless, the training opportunities are still not distributed equally across the institutions; usually due to unavailability of funding or institutional backing or motivation. The empirical research indicates that there are inconsistent professional development among the librarians in Nigeria. Mahdi and Gahsua (2024) discovered that a good number of librarians engage in professional development practices, whereas Anene and Idiedo (2021) revealed that few librarians participated in virtual trainings in the COVID-19 pandemic. On the same note, Idhalama (2020) found out that training opportunities in Enugu state public libraries were not sufficient, and most personnel divided their own funds to get the training and got little training in computers. Madukoma and Garba (2022) have discovered that federal universities librarians in North-West Nigeria show low scores on continuous professional development and training due to a lack of organizational sponsorship. Iwuchukwu and Echedom (2020), on the other hand, found the degree of training activity relatively high in the Imo State academic libraries, and Gbemi-Ogunleye et al. (2020) have found a positive correlation between staff training and the enhanced performance of employees in the Southern Nigerian universities. Kimaro (2022) also noted that Tanzanian librarians had high professional development levels, and most librarians were enrolled in frequent training.

In general, studies have shown that professional development amongst librarians in Nigeria is still below the standards in the rest of the world. Although one may identify the importance of the given aspect, there is a lack of institutional support and access to training to facilitate the improvement of competence over time. In order to be viable in the 21st century, the development of staffs should be a strategic requirement of the library, whereby librarians are equipped with skills needed to deliver their services with efficiency and in an interface, manner using technology and delivering satisfaction to their clients.

Professional Development and Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery in Libraries

Professional development is also essential in improving the competencies and general service delivery of librarians in libraries. It includes training and capacity-building programs that equip librarians with knowledge, skills, and abilities to work well in a changing academic environment (Oyedipe et al., 2021). This is possible through constant learning which enables librarians to advance their professional practice, enhance efficiency and attain higher standards of service delivery. The advantages of staff development to an individual and institutions are that it ensures competence, self-growth and productivity. It also contributes to promotion, the development of confidence, and the preparedness to new challenges (Cobblah&Jiagge, 2024).

The empirical research supports the high correlation between the professional development and the performance of librarians. According to Anyaegbu and Wali (2021), training and development was found to promote competencies and job effectiveness of librarians. On the same note, Alala et al. (2022) have found an average positive relationship ($r = 0.54$) between continuing education and service delivery in academic libraries in Imo State and this means that the librarians who undertake more professional learning present better services. In one more work, Nwaigbo and Edom (2023) found out that in-service training and service delivery in the Nigerian public libraries had a very high positive correlation ($r = 0.947$), and 89.68 percent of the service delivery improvement was explained by the staff training activities.

The positive correlation ($r = 0.271$, $p < 0.05$) between capacity building and ICT skills and service delivery between library personnel was also found by Akintola (2021), who stated that the enhancement of skills has a direct positive effect on the performance of libraries in Southwestern Nigerian universities. All these studies together point to the same direction in that professional improvement, through workshops, training, continuing education, and ICT skills acquisition directly leads to enhancement of competence, innovativeness and user-friendly service provision. Therefore, the development of the profession of librarians is one of the foundations of good library services. The constant training is not only fitting the librarians with technical and interpersonal skills needed in the contemporary libraries but also keeping the delivery of services efficient, responsive and in correspondence with the needs of the institutions and the users.

III. Methodology

The study adopted a correlational design. The study population comprised 295 librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria, and the entire population was used as the sample. Accordingly, the total enumeration (census) sampling technique was adopted to ensure full coverage. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Influence of Professional Development on Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery in University Libraries Questionnaire (IPDLCSAQ)*. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for analysis. Descriptive measures, such as frequencies, were used to analyse the response rate. Research Questions One and Two were answered using mean and standard deviation, with a criterion mean set at 3.00. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC), as it examined the significant relationship between one dependent variable and one independent variable. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

IV. Results

Questionnaire Response Rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Number of Questionnaire Administered	Number of Questionnaire Returned	Percentage of Questionnaire Returned
295	251	85%

A total of 295 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 251 (85%) copies were returned. The response rate of 85% is considered adequate for the study because the standard and acceptable response rate for most studies is 60% (Sataloff&Vontela, 2021). Baruch and Holtom (2008), in their meta-analysis, reported an average response rate of about 52.7% for studies involving individual respondents. Hence, a 91% response rate is significantly higher than this average and is considered both very good and acceptable for research purposes. Research Question 1: What is the extent of librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: TheExtent of Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery

S/N	Statements	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
a.	I can confidently make use of Microsoft office package, Word Access Excel and Power Point for Service delivery	149	58	25	4	15	4.28	1.10
b.	I possess information search and retrieval skills which enhance my service delivery	117	91	30	1	12	4.20	1.00
c.	I can confidently manage library collections	112	87	32	3	17	4.09	1.11
d.	I can handle user's information literacy programmes of my library effectively	117	91	24	8	11	4.18	1.03
e.	I can confidently navigate database and library management software	77	100	45	15	14	3.84	1.10
f.	I can confidently use computers for service delivery in the library	103	91	27	13	17	4.00	1.16
g.	I possess software installation and computer troubleshooting skills	76	74	50	26	25	3.60	1.29
h.	I am capable of managing library's online and offline databases.	86	84	42	17	22	3.78	1.24
i.	I am capable of creating, updating and maintaining institutional repository in the library	84	92	40	19	16	3.83	1.16
j.	I can confidently install printers, scanners, and other applications on library systems.	94	74	36	18	29	3.74	1.34
k.	I possess strong communication skills	118	94	24	5	10	4.22	0.98
l.	I possess Customer service orientation skill	128	84	20	2	17	4.21	1.09
m.	I am capable of utilizing social media tools to market library services and resources.	111	92	25	8	15	4.10	1.10
n.	I possess the skills to create online instructional materials for users	95	94	31	11	20	3.93	1.18
o.	I am able to evaluate internet resources and services of my library	114	93	17	14	13	4.12	1.10
p.	I am able to send and receive information to users online	130	78	15	15	13	4.18	1.12
Aggregate Mean							4.02	1.13
Criterion Mean							3.00	

Table 2 shows an aggregate mean of 4.02, which is above the criterion mean of 3.00. This indicates a high extent of librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. Respondents demonstrated strong competencies in areas such as using Microsoft Office packages for service delivery (mean = 4.28, Std. Dev. = 1.10), possessing information search and retrieval skills (mean = 4.20, Std. Dev. = 1.00), and handling user information literacy programs (mean = 4.18, Std. Dev. = 1.03). Additionally, respondents showed high levels of competency in managing library collections (mean = 4.09, Std. Dev. = 1.11) and utilizing social media tools to market library services and resources (mean = 4.10, Std. Dev. = 1.10). These findings indicate that librarians possess significant competencies that enhance effective service delivery in their respective libraries.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of professional development of librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: The Extent of Professional Development of Librarians

S/N	Extent of Professional Development	VHE	HE	NE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
a.	Continuing education program i.e., acquisition of BSc., and Ph.D. Certificate	169	70	1	3	7	4.55	0.84
b.	Attending Professional Courses e.g., Database Management courses, IT-related courses, data science-related courses, etc.	110	103	12	16	10	4.14	1.04
c.	Mentoring of junior staff	95	103	21	17	15	3.98	1.13
d.	Research and Publications	100	113	14	11	13	4.10	1.04
e.	Attending seminars regularly	99	100	9	30	13	3.96	1.17
f.	Attending conferences regularly	94	96	24	30	7	3.96	1.10
g.	Attending workshops regularly	71	104	23	37	16	3.71	1.21
h.	Refresher courses	79	95	27	32	18	3.74	1.23
i.	Attending Professional orientation/ Induction	88	96	21	32	14	3.84	1.20
j.	Job rotation in library	98	114	17	13	9	4.11	0.99
k.	On-the-job training	103	114	20	6	8	4.19	0.92
l.	Self-study	118	98	11	11	13	4.18	1.06
m.	Leadership and Management Programmes	93	93	17	35	13	3.87	1.20
n.	Information Training	97	96	22	27	9	3.98	1.11

o.	Online Resources and Networks	96	100	18	24	13	3.96	1.14
Aggregate Mean							4.02	1.09
Criterion Mean							3.00	

Table 3 shows an aggregate mean of 4.02, which is above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating a high extent of professional development among librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The data suggest that librarians are actively engaged in various professional development activities, including participation in continuing education programmes such as acquiring higher degrees (mean = 4.55, Std. Dev. = 0.84) and attending professional courses like database management and IT-related courses (mean = 4.14, Std. Dev. = 1.04).

Other areas with high levels of involvement include on-the-job training (mean = 4.19, Std. Dev. = 0.92), self-study (mean = 4.18, Std. Dev. = 1.06), and job rotation in the library (mean = 4.11, Std. Dev. = 0.99). Additionally, respondents demonstrated substantial engagement in research and publications (mean = 4.10, Std. Dev. = 1.04) and mentoring of junior staff (mean = 3.98, Std. Dev. = 1.13). These findings suggest that librarians in South-South Nigeria are highly committed to professional growth and development, which enhances their competencies and prepares them to effectively address the evolving needs of library services.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between professional development and librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Table 4: Relationship between Professional Development and Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery

Model Summary					
Model 1	R .573 ^a	R Square .328	Adjusted R Square .325	Std. Error of the Estimate .71873	
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	62.729	1	62.729	121.435	.000 ^b
Residual	128.626	249	.517		
Total	191.355	250			
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.080	.271		3.992	.000
Extent of professional Development of Librarians	.731	.066	.573	11.020	.000

a. Dependent Variable: The extent of librarians' competencies in service delivery

b. Predictors: (Constant), The extent of professional development of librarians

The R-value of 0.573 indicates a moderate positive correlation between professional development and librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The R² value of 0.328 implies that approximately 32.8% of the variance in librarians' competencies in service delivery is explained by their extent of professional development, reflecting moderate explanatory power. The F-value of 121.435 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates that the overall model is statistically significant.

Specifically, the extent of professional development of librarians has a coefficient of 0.731 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant positive impact on librarians' competencies in service delivery. This suggests that as professional development activities increase, there is a corresponding improvement in librarians' service delivery competencies. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, as the data indicate that there is a significant relationship between professional development and librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

V. Discussion of findings

Extent of Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery in University Libraries

This study revealed that the extent of librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria is high. This finding agrees with the one by Salam et al. (2018) which found that librarians' level of competencies in service delivery was high. To further corroborate this finding, the study of Atte and Gbaje (2016) revealed that information handling, cataloguing and classification, facilitating skills and training were recorded as the highest professional competencies of librarians in Nigerian university libraries. This high level of librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria can be attributed to continuous professional development initiatives, targeted training programmes, and an increased emphasis on equipping librarians with essential skills to meet the evolving demands of modern library services.

Extent of Professional Development of Librarians in University Libraries

This study found that the extent of professional development among librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria is high. This finding concurs with the one Gbemi-Ogunleye et al. (2020), that there is a high extent of staff training and development among employees in university libraries in Southern, Nigeria. To further substantiate the finding, Kimaro (2022) found that the extent of professional development of librarians in Mzumbe University and Sokoine University of Agriculture is high. This high extent of professional development among librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria is likely due to institutional recognition of the critical role of continuous learning in enhancing service delivery and the increasing availability of funding and opportunities for training and skill acquisition.

Relationship Between Professional Development and Librarians' Competencies in Service Delivery

This study found that there is a significant relationship between professional development and librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This finding concurs with that of Alala et al. (2022) which found that a moderate positive magnitude of relationship exists between continuing education and service delivery in academic libraries. To further corroborate the finding, Nwaigbo and Edom (2023) found that there is a positively very high extent of relationship between in-service training and the extent of service delivery. The significant relationship between professional development and librarians' competencies in service delivery in university libraries in South-South Nigeria underscores the critical role that continuous education and training play in equipping librarians with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively meet the dynamic demands of their roles.

VI. Conclusion

The study concluded that librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria possess a high level of competencies in service delivery and are actively engaged in professional development activities such as workshops, training, and continuing education. It further established a significant positive relationship between professional development and librarians' competencies, indicating that continuous learning and skill enhancement directly improve service quality and effectiveness. Thus, ongoing professional development remains essential for sustaining efficient, technology-driven, and user-focused library services.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The management of the library in the university should focus on and invest regularly in professional development programmes like workshops, seminars, training programmes on the use of ICT, database management and new library technologies to equip librarians with the skills and competencies required.
2. The librarians are supposed to be encouraged and assisted to acquire higher educational and professional degrees (e.g. postgraduate and certifications). This should be made possible by institutions through study leave, scholarships and grants.
3. The library management ought to develop mentorship programmes whereby the seniors and junior librarians are paired to facilitate the transfer of knowledge, career development and teamwork in addressing problems in delivering the services.
4. Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and international library associations should be used by libraries in offering well-structured, accredited and sustainable professional development opportunities.

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