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University of Agriculture
P.M.B. 2240
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P.M.B. 2240, Abeokuta, Ogun State Nigeria. <atagboola05@yahoo.com>

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IBADAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AS PREDICTORS OF LIBRARY PERSONNEL'S PERCEPTION OF PRESERVATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN NIGERIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

S. O. Popoola, Ph.D

Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
08035192262

and

Samson Oyeniyi Akande

Kenneth Dike Library
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
08078768060

ABSTRACT

The study examined the extent to which the demographic variables of library personnel in Nigerian federal university libraries predict their perception about preservation of information resources. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample while questionnaire method was used to collect data. 660 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the library personnel in Nigerian federal university libraries out of which the 510 which were returned well filled were analysed. The reliability coefficient (r) of the questionnaire used for data collection was 0.69 obtained using Cronbach - alpha method. The study revealed that a significant relationship exists between age and perception of library personnel about preservation of information resources ($r = 0.16, p < 0.01$). The demographic variables (gender, age, section of work, length of service, education and designation) was also found to jointly influence the perception of the library personnel and these accounted for 5.7% ($R^2 = 0.057$) of the total variance in perception of the library personnel about preservation of information resources. However, only three demographic variables viz age ($B = 6.690; p < 0.05$), designation ($B = -0.104; p < 0.05$) and service ($B = -8.458; p < 0.05$) could predict library personnel's perception of preservation of information resources. Suggestions were offered on how to make training and education improve perception of the library personnel about preservation of information resources.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries all over the world have been adjudged as agents for social, economic, political and educational change. The library is a component part of the history of civilization and it always has an assumed responsibility to its immediate environment. Fayose (2000) sees preservation of information as one of the responsibilities of libraries to its immediate environment. According to her, "the library has become a place entrusted with the acquisition, organization, preservation, retrieval

and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear”.

Deterioration of library information resources, especially the paper-based ones is an issue that deserves global attention. Harvey (1993), described deterioration as a loss of quality in any library material which decreases its ability to carry out its intended function. He listed actions caused by some inherent instability of the materials and those caused by external agents as responsible for deterioration of library materials. The significance of preservation activities in the library mission world-wide is clearly understood in Feather's (1991) submission that:

In the last 20 years, and more markedly so during the 1980s, the library profession in many countries has apparently reached the conclusion, through its various representative bodies, that preservation is an area of significant and serious professional concern (pp. 105-106).

The global concession on the significance of preservation endeavor in libraries is hinged on the fact that preservation enhances access and use of the library collections. The practice of preservation in libraries is, however, dependent on the perception of library management and the individual staff about preservation of information resources. In this regard, Harvey (1993) opines that change of perceptions of the library personnel who are responsible for the management of library collections is a potent factor to recognize in library's attempt to preserve its collections. Why is a call for change in perceptions necessary if perception does not influence preservation practice? Definitely, lack of proper awareness, understanding and conceptualization of a library operation can negatively affect the commitment of the personnel to it. Clement (1987) report on the world's scene of preservation and conservation of library and archival materials seems to be in support of this claim. He stated that:

In the light of the knowledge of the size of the preservation problems facing us throughout the world and the fact that in so many cases, there are plenty of simple and low cost measures that could be taken to improve general conditions, the fact that almost two thirds of all institutions surveyed had shown no improvement demonstrates the need for increased awareness and improved dissemination of information on preservation problems and how to cope with them (Clement, 1987: 8).

A general meaning of the term perception is immediate awareness. A

person perceives something when he/she is directly or immediately aware of it. Martin (1998) sees sense perception as the use of our senses to acquire information about the world around us and to become acquainted with objects, events and their features. Luthan (1998) opines that behavior is largely a product of the way people perceive themselves and their world around them. This implies that perception is highly correlated with actions. A quick inference to be drawn here is that a positive perception of the preservation of information resources by library personnel will influence their practices of preservation. Actually, perception has been defined as the cognitive impression that is formed of reality which in turn influences the individual's actions and behavior towards that object (www.marketingnews.co.in/glossary).

Demography is the study of population that involves birth, death and diseases in a particular community. Modern day demographic study is however not only population conscious but also has a time dimension. Studies related to demographic variables are abundant in the literature but it appears as if only few studies have been carried out on the relationship between demographic variables and perception of library personnel about preservation of information resources. Findings on the study about demographic variables have revealed that age, gender, marital status, and educational qualifications have important effects on career commitment. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) affirmed that demographic variables such as age, sex, marital status and educational qualifications are very important factors in the career commitment of staff to duties. Babalola and Olapegba (2005) asserted that the characteristics of the perceiver, personality, past experience, values, habits, needs and attitudes of a person may all influence the perceptual process of a person. Adediwura and Tayo (2007) opined that background knowledge in the form of schemas affects perception.

It is generally believed that elderly people show greater perception in their assessment of situations and issues than the young ones. This may not be unconnected with their long years of experience which they have acquired over the years due to their exposure to real practical life situations. Alagbu (1999) upheld this view by asserting that individual's perception of issues is to a large extent dependent on their experience. This implies a relationship between experience of an individual and his/her perception of issues. The study of Oduwole (2007) confirms a strong relationship between age and skill acquisition (experience) of librarians in university and research libraries in Nigeria.

Despite the fact that experts have written on preservation of information resources in Nigeria, there are not many empirical studies focused on demographic variables and perception of library personnel about preservation of information resources. It is therefore, expedient to investigate how demographic variables could influence the perception of library personnel about preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the relationship among demographic variables and perception about preservation of information resources.
2. Ascertain the predictive ability of demographic variables on perception of preservation of information resources.
3. Determine the effect of demographic variables on library personnel's perception of preservation of information resources.
4. Ascertain the influence of professional status on perception of preservation of information resources.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship among demographic variables of library personnel and their perception about preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries?
2. To what extent would respondents' demographic variables predict perception about preservation of information resources?
3. What is the relative effect of demographic variables on perception about preservation of information resources?
4. Is there any significant difference in perception about preservation of information resources between professional and para-professional library personnel?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study investigated the effect of demographic variables on library personnel's perception of preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries. This was for the purpose of ascertaining the influence of demographic variables like age, gender, educational qualification, work experience on perception of preservation of information resources among the library personnel in university libraries in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The correlational survey research design was adopted to measure the relationship among demographic variables and library personnel's perception of preservation of information resources in federal university libraries.

Population and Sampling Technique

The target population for the study consists of all the 771 professional and para-professional library personnel in 24 federal university libraries in Nigeria. Twenty out of these twenty four federal university libraries were selected by simple random sampling technique using a table of random numbers. The entire 660 professional and para-professional staff in the twenty selected university libraries constituted the sample of the study. This represents 89.0% of the total population.

The reason for choosing this category of staff is because they are involved in carrying out professional services in the library by virtue of their education and training. They are supposed to be involved in preservation management either at the level of decision making, policy development, training of users and staff on basic preservation methods. They are also involved in shelving of books, caring and other good housekeeping practices that ensure preservation of the information resources in the libraries.

291(57.1%) males, 219(42.9%) females served as subjects for the study. 49(9.6%) of the respondents were old in age (above 50 years), while 50(9.8%) of them were young in age (below 26 years). 411(80.60%) that constituted the majority were between the age range of 27 and 50 years. Their highest academic qualifications ranged from diploma in librarianship to doctor of Philosophy Ph.D.

Research Instrument

The only instrument used in collecting data for the study is the Perception of Preservation of Information Resources Scale (PPIRS) constructed by the researcher. In constructing the instrument, items were generated from the following areas:

- i. Principles of preservation of information resources.
- ii. The significance of preservation of information resources.
- iii. The conceptualization of preservation of information resources.
- iv. The factors contributing to preservation.

The instrument was validated with assistance from experts in the fields of

preservation of information resources and social psychology. Suggestions made by these individuals were used in modifying the instrument which was finally used to elicit data from the respondents. The instrument contains two sections. The first section was devoted to the demographic information on the respondents like age, gender, educational qualification and section of work in the library while the second section which contains 14 items was designed to elicit information on the perception of the library personnel about preservation of information resources.

The instrument was a four-point Likert format perception scale constructed to measure perception of respondents based on their agreement or disagreement with the items. The items were measured on: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. The instrument was trial-tested on a sample of 50 library personnel of the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan and Delta State University Library, Abraka, Delta State. The reliability coefficient (r) of 0.69 was obtained using cronbach-alpha method.

Procedure

The data for the study was collected mainly by mailed questionnaire to the selected university libraries through the conventional postal system. Copies of the questionnaire were mailed to identified contact persons that volunteered to assist in the administration of the questionnaire in each of the selected federal university libraries. Among the precautions taken to ensure a high response rate were series of contacts made by e-mails and telephone calls to the contact persons. Personalized covering letters with a stamped return envelopes were also included in the package of the questionnaire posted to the libraries.

Out of the 660 copies of the questionnaire administered, 510 copies returned were properly filled and considered useful for analysis. This represents a response rate of 77.3%.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were collated and analyzed for the purpose of the study. The demographic data of age, sex, highest educational qualification, working experience were analyzed using simple percentage and frequency counts. Research questions were answered using Pearson's product moment correlation, t-test and regression analysis.

RESULTS

Research Question 1:

What is the relationship among demographic variables of library personnel and perception of preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries?

**TABLE I:
CORRELATION TABLE OF ANALYSIS ON DEMOGRAPHIC
VARIABLES AND PERCEPTION OF PRESERVATION BY LIBRARY
PERSONNEL**

Variables	X	S.D	Perception of Preservation
Perception of Preservation	1.60	0.40	1.00
Gender	1.43	0.50	-0.047
Age	4.65	1.54	0.16**
Section of Work	3.74	2.11	0.057
Education	3.18	2.08	0.053
Length of Service	16.50	8.79	-0.066
Designation	1.46	0.50	-0.089*

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table I shows the means (X), standard deviations (S.D) and correlations among the variables of interest used in the study. From Table I, age of library personnel has a weak, positive and significant relationship with library personnel's perception of preservation of information resources ($r=0.16$, $P<0.01$). This shows that as library personnel increase in age, their perception of preservation of information resources also improves. In the same vein, the designation of the personnel has a weak, negative and significant relationship with the perception of the personnel about the preservation of information resources ($r=-0.089$; $p<0.05$). This implies that para-professional library personnel had better perception of preservation compared with their professional counterparts.

Also, library personnel's gender has a weak, negative relationship which is not significant with their perception of preservation ($r=-0.047$; $p>0.05$).

Although this relationship is not significant, it suggests that the male personnel demonstrated poorer perception of preservation compared with their female counterparts. In its own case, section of work of the library personnel has a weak, positive relationship with perception of information resources ($r = 0.057$; $p > 0.05$). This is also not a significant relationship. It however means that library personnel working at sections where preservation activities are carried out would have a better perception of preservation of information resources. Similarly the educational qualification of the personnel has a weak, positive and insignificant relationship with their perception of preservation ($r = 0.053$; $p > 0.05$). It follows therefore that improved educational qualification leads to better perception of preservation of information resources. Length of service of the personnel yielded a weak, negative relationship which is not significant with perception of preservation ($r = -0.066$; $p > 0.05$). Although this relationship is not significant, it suggests that the library personnel with short years of service have a good perception of preservation compared with those with long years of service.

Research Question 2:

To what extent would respondents' demographic variables predict perception about preservation of information resources?

TABLE II:
USING DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES TO PREDICT PERCEPTION ABOUT PRESERVATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES

$R = 0.239$ $R \text{ square} = 0.057$ $\text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.044$ $\text{Standard Error of Estimate (SEE)} = 0.4791$					
Analysis of Variance					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	6.972	7	.996	4.339	.000
Residual	115.226	502	.230		
Total	122.198	509			

Significant at 0.05 level

Table II shows that the demographic variables (gender, age, section of work, education, length of service and designation) have a significant influence on the perception of the library personnel. Demographic variables account for 5.7% of the total variance in perception of preservation (R square = 0.057). This percentage is significant. The analysis of variance performed on multiple regression yielded an F-ratio of 4.34 and was found to be significant at 0.05 level (F = 4.34, df = 7,502, P<0.05). This result reveals that the capability of the demographic variables to predict perception could not have occurred by chance.

Research Question 3:

What is the relative effect of demographic variables on perception about preservation of information resources?

**TABLE III:
RELATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES
TO THE PREDICTION OF LIBRARY PERSONNEL'S PERCEPTION
ABOUT PRESERVATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard-ized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.622	.139	-	11.628	.000
Gender	-5.022	.044	-.051	-1.145	.253
Age	6.690	.015	.210	4.431	.000
Education	7.048	.010	.030	.674	.501
Subject	2.665	.020	.001	.013	.989
Section	2.310	.010	.010	.222	.824
Designation	-0.104	.043	-.105	-2.413	.016
Service	-8.458	.003	-.152	-3.194	.001

Significant at 0.05 level.

To determine the extent to which each of the seven variables contributed to the prediction of perception of library personnel about preservation of information resources, the test of significance of the estimated parameters in the regression model was carried out in Table III. From Table III, it is shown that the three major determinants of library personnel's perception of preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries are age ($\beta = 0.210$, $df = 502$, $t = 4.431$, $P < 0.05$); designation ($\beta = -0.105$, $df = 502$, $t = -2.413$, $P < 0.05$); length of service ($\beta = -0.152$, $df = 502$, $t = -3.194$, $P < 0.05$). The table shows that only age, designation and length of service made significant contributions to the prediction of perception of preservation of information resources. In the same vein, the three demographic variables viz age ($B = 6.690$; $p < 0.05$), designation ($B = -0.104$; $p < 0.05$) and service ($B = -8.458$; $p < 0.05$) could predict perception of library personnel about preservation of information resources. Thus, the three demographic variables are important factors to reckon with in improving the perception of library personnel of perception of information resources.

Research Question 4:

Is there any significant difference in perception about preservation of information resources between professional and para-professional library personnel?

**TABLE IV:
COMPARISON OF PROFESSIONAL AND PARA-PROFESSIONAL
LIBRARY PERSONNEL'S PERCEPTION OF PRESERVATION**

Status/ Designation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-cal	P	Remarks
Professional	236	37.203	4.600	508	2.78	0.006	Significant ($P < 0.05$)
Para- Professional	274	38.376	4.871				

Significant at 0.05 level.

Table IV reveals that a significant difference is found in perception between professional and para-professional library personnel in federal university libraries in Nigeria ($t\text{-cal} = 2.78$; $P < 0.05$).

The findings show a significant difference in perception between the professional and para-professional library personnel in federal university libraries in Nigeria. The results show that the para-professional personnel (with mean score of 38.38) are slightly better in perception of preservation than the professional personnel (with mean score of 37.20).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study reveal a significant relationship between age and perception of library personnel about preservation of information resources. Social psychologists believe that individual's perception is greatly influenced by his/her experience which is the knowledge and skill gained through doing something for a period of time (Hatfield, 1997; Alagbu, 1999).

Another significant finding of this study is that the demographic variables of the library personnel (gender, age, section of work, length of service, and designation) have significant multiple correlation with their perception of preservation. This shows that when the demographic variables are examined jointly, the finding is remarkable. The finding also indicates that the six demographic variables accounted for 5.7% of the total variance in perception of preservation of information resources by the library personnel ($R^2=0.057$). This shows that demographic variables when taken together have significant influence on library personnel's perception of preservation of information resources ($F=4.34$, $df=502$, $p<0.05$) In other words, significant differences exist in the demographic variables on the perception of the personnel about preservation of information resources.

The finding of the study corroborates Kwon *et al.* (2007) who found that there were significant differences in the consumers' demographic variables (gender, age, education) on their perception of fashion web site attributes. Another finding of this study is that age correlate positively with the library personnel's perception of preservation. This finding is not in line with that of Ajayi and Banmeke (2007) who reported that their respondents' perception of environmental issues did not have significant association with their age. It was also found in the study that although there was a positive relationship between the respondents' educational qualification and their perception of preservation, the relationship was not found to be significant. This finding certainly contradicts that of Jathar *et al.* (2002) who reported that educational level showed a clear-cut influence on their patients' perception about knowledge of anesthesia. The finding is also at variance with Ajayi and Banmeke (2007) who asserted that level of education and farming experience were significantly

associated with their respondents' perception of environmental issues.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The great challenge before the federal university libraries in Nigeria is how to salvage the deteriorating library information resources in a bid to improve access to them. While the library management has the organizational responsibility of formulating policy that will spell out and guide preservation programmes, the staff's interest and commitment to the preservation programmes could be affected by their personal characteristics. This study has established that demographic variables (age, gender, education, designation) are positively and significantly correlated with perception of preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries. In addition, age, designation and length of service are found to be the predictors of perception of preservation of information resources. It is therefore recommended that these variables should be reckoned with when trying to improve the perception of library personnel about preservation of information resources especially when considering personnel to select for training and education in an attempt to improve the perception of the personnel.

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