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## **Individual Characteristics as Correlates of Library Personnel's Attitude towards Preservation of Information Resources in Nigerian Federal University Libraries**

*by*

**Samson Oyeniya Akande  
Kenneth Dike Library,  
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria**

### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the effect of individual characteristics of personnel like gender, age, educational qualification, work experience, on attitude towards preservation of information resources in federal university libraries in Nigeria. The research data was collected through questionnaire method from 660 library personnel consisting of professional and para-professional library staff randomly sampled, out of which 510 responded. The study found that gender was not significantly related to attitude towards preservation of information resources but a significant relationship was found to exist between educational qualification and attitude. It was also established that age and sections of work of the personnel were not correlated with their attitude towards preservation of information resources. Some necessary suggestions based on the findings were made.*

### **Introduction**

Preservation of information resources is one of the cardinal operations of the library. Little wonder Cloonan (2004) asserts that librarians need to strive to ensure the longevity of cultural heritage materials. Significant resources

must be committed to the preservation of information bearing materials because of the fast rate of their deterioration due to the interplay of physical and chemical factors which affect their nature and physical appearance. According to Feather (1996), the physical deterioration of library materials, especially of paper-based materials, is now globally recognized as one of the major professional issues of librarianship.

It appears that the concept of "preservation" of information resources as expressed in the literature is as old as the concept of the library. However, various authors who have written on this significant library function succinctly put it that preservation was neglected until late 80s when awakened interest was noticed about it in the developed countries like Europe and America. Confirming the past neglect of preservation of information resources is Alexander Wilson's report of 1988 on preservation of library materials in European community which states that:

*'the raising of awareness among the library profession, scholars, governors, and potential founders of libraries, and indeed among the general public, must be a priority objective at this time of general indifference and ignorance on the subject in the European environment (Harvey, 1993: 102).'*

While a positive attitude has been observed towards preservation of information resources in recent times in the developed countries, African countries especially the Sub-Saharan seems to have shown little or no commitment (Igbinsosa, 2000; Fosu and Akussah, 2002; Ngulube, 2002, 2005). Ngulube (2005) asserts that "on the basis of personal

observations, surveys and reports from consultants, like Mazikana (1992) and Alegbeleye (2000), one could argue that the preservation scene in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is in a dismal state.

Attitude offers a theoretical explanation for socially significant behaviours. It is of major interest to scholars because of the key role it plays in virtually every aspect of social life. Severin and Tankard (1992) are of the opinion that by knowing the attitude of people, it is possible to do something about the prediction and control of their behaviour. Hattfield (1997) sees attitude as a predisposition to respond in a certain way to a person, object, situation, event or idea. Attitude like any psychological construct cannot be directly observed. However, a person's attitude towards an issue or object can be deduced from his behaviour in situations involving that object. According to Martin (1998), an individual's attitude towards an object or issue is always related to the expected result associated with that object or issue. When a person has positive attitude, the expected outcome is pleasant feeling or result. It may also be inferred from his agreement or disagreement with statements expressing beliefs and or feelings about that object.

Several studies have been documented on the relationship between individual characteristics like age, education, gender, work experience and attitude towards some phenomena like attitudes towards the use of computer in libraries. For example, Delameter (2000) observed that education, social class, religion and gender influence attitude. Lee (1988) has found that there is a significant relationship among level of education, knowledge of computer, works experience in library automation and attitudes towards the use



of computer. Popoola (2002) established that gender was positively correlated with users' attitudes towards computer-based library systems in Agricultural research libraries in Nigeria. Despite these studies, it seems probable if adequate attention has been given to the influence of individual characteristics of library personnel on their attitude towards preservation of information resources in federal university libraries in Nigeria.

Based on the negative attitude towards preservation of information resources in Africa as recorded in the literature by authors like Ngulube (2005), Alegbeleye (2000), it is therefore important to examine whether factors like individual characteristics have any effect on attitudes of library personnel towards preservation of information resources in federal university libraries in Nigeria.

Specially, the study was conducted to test the following null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between gender of library personnel and their attitude towards preservation of information resources.
2. There is no significant relationship between educational qualification of library personnel and their attitude towards preservation of information resources.
3. The relationship between library personnel's age and attitude towards preservation of information resources is not significant.
4. The section of work in the library is not significantly related to attitude of library personnel towards preservation of information resource.

## **Methodology**

Random sampling technique was used to select twenty university libraries out of the twenty-four federal university libraries in Nigeria (representing 83.3%) using a table of random numbers. The entire professional and the para-professional library personnel working in the twenty selected federal university libraries constituted the sample of the study. This sampling technique was used because the twenty-four federal universities formed a sampling frame from which a representative sample could be selected with convenience using random sampling technique. A total sample size of 660 library personnel in the twenty selected university libraries was used for the study. They were drawn from a total population of 741 library personnel in the twenty-four federal university libraries in Nigeria.

## **Research Instrument**

A questionnaire was used to collect data. It is a self - constructed multi-item scale tagged "Individual Characteristics and Attitudes (ICAA) Scale". Section A of the scale contains items on demographic information such as; age, sex, highest educational qualification and subject background, of the respondents. Section B contains 20 items designed to elicit information on the attitude of the respondents towards preservation of information resources. The items were constructed to cover the aspects of preservation like the principles, practice, policy, finance, storage, environmental control, disaster preparedness, security of materials, treatment, etc. in both positive and negative statements.

The respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statements on a 4-point scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree. The coefficient of reliability  $r$  of the scale was ( $r = 0.68$ ) using cronbach-alpha method. Out of the 660 copies of the questionnaire distributed to respondents, 510 were filled and returned given a response rate of 77.3%.

### Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using Chi-Square and Pearson Moment Correlation statistical methods for testing the four null hypotheses generated for the study.

### Results

Of the 510 respondents to the questionnaire, 291(57.1%) were males and 219(42.9%) were females. Their ages ranged from 26 – 50 years and above. Their highest academic qualifications ranged from diploma certificate in library studies to doctorate degree in librarianship.

**Table 1: Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship between Gender of Library Personnel and their Attitude towards Preservation of Information Resources**

Gender	Attitude towards Preservation		Total	$\chi^2$ Crit.	$\chi^2$ Cal.	df	P
	Negative	Positive					
Male	140 48.10%	151 51.9%	291 100.00%	3.84	.224	1	0.636
Female	110 50.2%	109 49.8%	219 100.00%				
Total	250 49.00%	260 51.00%	510 100.0%				

Significant at  $p < 0.05$

From the collected data, as presented in Table 1, 140 respondents (48.1%) of males had a negative attitude towards preservation of information resources, while 151(51.9%) had a positive attitude; 110(50.2%) of females had a negative attitude while 109(49.8%) had positive attitude towards preservation of information resources.

Table 1 shows that gender of library personnel is not significantly related to their attitude towards preservation of information resources using the chi-square statistics. This is because the chi-square calculated value of 0.224 is lower than the critical value of 3.84, which was significant at 0.05 alpha levels ( $\chi^2 = .224$ ,  $df = 1$ ;  $P>0.05$ ). The result could be summarized as:  $\chi^2$  crit. = 3.84;  $\chi^2$  cal = .224;  $df = 1$ ;  $p (.636) >0.05$ .

The findings in Table 1 indicates that the earlier postulated null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between gender of library personnel and their attitude towards preservation of information resources was accepted.

**Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship between Educational Qualifications of the Library Personnel and their Attitude towards Preservation of Information Resources**

Educational Qualifications	Attitude towards Preservation		Total	$\chi^2$ Crit	$\chi^2$ Cal.	df	p
	Negative	Positive					
	Dip. in Library Studies	47 (39.5%)					
B.L.S.	48 (44.00%)	61 (56.0%)	109 (100.0%)				
B.Sc.	15 (45.5%)	18 (54.50%)	33 (100.0%)				
B.Ed.	7 (30.4%)	16 (69.6%)	23 (100.0%)				
M.L.S.	86 (60.1%)	57 (39.9%)	143 (100.0%)				
M.Ed.	11 (55.0%)	9 (45.0%)	20 (100.0%)				
Ph.D.	10 (43.5%)	13 (56.5%)	23 (100.0%)				
Others	26 (65.0%)	14 (35.0%)	40 (100.0%)				
<b>Total</b>	<b>250 (49.0%)</b>	<b>260 (51.0%)</b>	<b>510 (100.0%)</b>				

Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between educational qualification of library personnel and their attitude towards preservation of information resources. The  $\chi^2$  Critical (14.1) is far less than  $\chi^2$  Calculated (20.48) at 0.05 alpha level of significance when the degree of freedom is 7 ( $\chi^2 = 20.48$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Based on these findings, the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between educational qualification and attitude of library personnel toward preservation of information resources was rejected.

**Table 3: Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship between Library Personnel's Age and their Attitude towards Preservation of Information Resources**

Age Bracket	Attitude towards Preservation		Total	$\chi^2$ Crit.	$\chi^2$ Cal.	df	p
	Negative	Positive					
15 – 20	16 55.2%	13 44.8%	29 100.0%	12.59	2.65	6	0.85
21 – 26	11 52.4%	10 47.6%	21 100.0%				
27 – 32	23 43.4%	30 56.60%	53 100.0%				
33 – 38	43 43.9%	55 56.1%	98 100.0%				
39 – 44	79 51.0%	76 49.0%	155 100.0%				
45 – 50	53 50.5%	52 49.5%	105 100.0%				
50 +	25 51.0%	24 49.0%	49 100.0%				
<b>Total</b>	<b>250 49.0%</b>	<b>260 51.0%</b>	<b>510 100.0%</b>				

Significant at  $p < 0.05$

The data as analyzed in Table 3 has revealed that the age of library personnel and their attitude towards preservation of information resources are not significantly correlated. This is because the  $\chi^2$  Critical (12.59) is far greater than the  $\chi^2$  Calculated (2.65) at 0.05 alpha level of significance, when the degree of freedom is 6 ( $\chi^2 = 2.65$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The findings imply that there is no significant relationship between the age of library personnel and attitude towards preservation of information resources. Based on this result, the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between the age of library personnel and their attitude towards preservation of information resources was accepted.

**Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis of the Relationship between Library Personnel’s Section of Work in the Library and their Attitude towards Preservation of Information Resources**

Section of Work	Attitude towards Preservation		Total	$\chi^2$ Crit	$\chi^2$ Cal.	df	p
	Negative	Positive					
Serials	27 38.0%	44 62.0%	71 100.0%	14.1	12.80	7	.077
Reference	33 47.1%	37 52.9%	70 100.0%				
Cataloguing	95 54.9%	78 45.1%	173 100.0%				
Collection Development	23 43.4%	30 56.6%	53 100.0%				
Binding	14 53.8%	12 46.2%	26 100.0%				
Reprography	5 38.5%	8 6.15%	13 100.0%				
Circulation	33 44.0%	42 56.0%	75 100.0%				
Computer Applications Unit	20 69.0%	9 31.0%	29 100.0%				
<b>Total</b>	<b>250 49.0%</b>	<b>260 51.0%</b>	<b>510 100.0%</b>				

Significant at  $p < 0.05$

#### *Individual Characteristics as Correlates of Library Personnel's Attitude*

Table 4 shows that there is no significant relationship between the section of work of the library personnel in the library and their attitude towards preservation of information resources since  $\chi^2$  Cal. (12.80) <  $\chi^2$  Crit. (14.1) and  $p$  (.077) > 0.05 – when the degree of freedom is 7. Thus,  $\chi^2 = 12.80$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This implies that there is no significant relationship between the library personnel's section of work in the library and their attitude towards preservation of information resources. The null hypothesis was; therefore accepted.

#### **Discussion**

The results of this study reveal that while educational qualification is significantly correlated with attitude of library personnel towards preservation of information resources as shown on Table 2, gender, age and section of work are not significantly related to attitude. The finding that there is significant relationship between educational qualification and attitude is in consonance with previous findings like Edegbai (1998) which established a correlation between education and attitude. He asserts that education is supposed to initiate a change of attitude and behavior that can lead to healthful practices. Similarly, Babalola (2001) has found that a strong relationship exists between change in attitude and acquisition of knowledge and education.

The findings of this study that age and gender are not related to attitude as shown on Tables 1 and 3 however disagree with Popoola (2002) who reported that age and gender play a significant role in determining users' attitudes towards Computer Based Library System in Nigerian based Agriculture Research Institutes.

Delameter (2000) has also observed that education, gender and race influence attitude. Lee (1988) asserts that there is a significant relationship among level of education, knowledge of computer and attitude towards the use of computer.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings and interpretations of this study, it could be concluded that attitude towards preservation of information resources is significantly related to educational qualification of library personnel while gender, age and work experience have no relationships with attitude of the personnel. This implies that level of education of the library personnel is a significant factor to focus when considering the possibility of improving the attitude of the personnel toward preservation of information resources in Nigerian federal university libraries. This is because; an improvement in preservation education will result in improvement of attitude towards preservation of information resources.

These findings have meaningful implications for the library administrators and the library personnel. The management should be interested in training their staff so as to enhance their education and experiences in preservation management. A way of doing this is to give full support to continuing education by sponsorship to seminars, conferences and workshops. The library personnel should be interested in self-development through training in all aspects of preservation education. This will improve their understanding and skill in preservation practices and management. The design of intervention programmes in preservation and conservation can help in this regard.



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