INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AS PREDICTOR OF LIBRARIANS' ATTITUDE TO CONSORTIUM IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined institutional support as a possible predictor of librarians' attitude to consortium in university libraries in South-East, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were tested at 0.5 level of significance. The research design was a correlation. The population of the study comprised one hundred and seventy-one (171) librarians from the five federal university libraries in South- East Nigeria. Due to the manageable size of the population, total enumeration was used. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using linear regressions and computed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSPS, V20). The study found that institutional support, such as access to training and institutional infrastructure support, significantly predicts librarians' attitudes towards consortiums in university libraries in South-East Nigeria. However, results showed that institutional financial support does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium. The study concluded that access to training and institutional infrastructure support is key factor that can enhance librarians' attitude toward consortium. Based on the findings, the study recommends, among other things, that the University Management should prioritize adequate institutional support, conduct regular needs assessments to identify the training and development needs of librarians, and provide targeted support to enhance their participation in consortium.

Keywords: Institutional Support, Librarians' Attitude, Consortium, Academic libraries, South-East, Nigeria.

Introduction

The need to share, transfer, and receive information resources is no longer a new concept in the field of librarianship. Prior to the emergence of the digital world, librarians have been engaging in different kinds of resource sharing to meet their users' needs at different times. Up till this present time, libraries and information centers are interconnected through consortium for

the purpose of sharing what they have in a common pattern or design for information exchange and communication with a view to improving efficiency (Che, Njiraine &Makori, 2022).

Library consortium is an official or formal arrangement by institutions with the sole aim of achieving enhanced access to human and material resources of the participating libraries for optimum user satisfaction. It involves the coming together of two or more libraries in a formal agreement to share their resources (Esse & Odeshi, 2016). To put it succinctly, library consortium is a comparative alliance of libraries to share human and information resources. It is formed to realize the benefits and opportunities of collaborative activity.

The main driving forces for consortium among libraries have been the increase in the number of publications, the rise in the cost of information resources, and the decline in library budgets. The increase in student enrolment in universities and the increasing demands for library services and collections from the 1980s onwards were other factors given by Suleiman, Hanafi, and Tanslikhan (2018) as responsible for the collaborative efforts.

Consortium has become a savior to most libraries in the world. In Africa, many libraries and information centers are engaging in consortiums to facilitate wider access to electronic and digital resources at affordable prices and to the best of terms of licenses (Ogunlade, 2021). However, several attempts by the Nigerian University Libraries Consortium under the auspices of the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) and the National Universities Commission to establish library consortium in Nigeria could not stand the test of time due to what Oyegade, Ogunsola and Okebukola (2014), Aina and Akande (2015) viewed as poor institutional support.

Institutional support refers to the systematic provision of resources, policies, and structures within an organization to facilitate the fulfillment of its mission, objectives, and needs of its stakeholders (Cunningham, 2021). Smith (2021) is of the view that adequate financial support from university administration enables librarians to participate in consortium activities by providing membership fees, travel expenses, and professional development opportunities. Asher (2015) posits that professional recognition of librarians' contributions to consortium initiatives by the university administration through awards, promotions, and other forms of acknowledgment motivates continued involvement and fosters a sense of professional pride.

According to Hardesty and Maxson (2017), a supportive infrastructure demonstrates to librarians that their institution values their contributions and is investing in their success. This

fosters a positive work environment, boosts morale, and enhances job satisfaction among librarians. Infrastructure support is essential for the effective functioning of libraries and the support of librarians within institutions. As noted by Bishop (2016), infrastructure support includes the provision of physical resources such as modern facilities, technology, and collections that enable librarians to carry out their duties effectively.

Todorinova (2015) asserted that support from parent institutions for professional development activities related to consortium engagement, such as workshops, conferences, and training, enhances librarians' skills and expertise in collaborative endeavors. Thus, in-house training plays a critical role in enabling library staff to thrive and achieve their goals. Unfortunately, most university libraries in the South-East provide little or no support for librarians' professional development and to engage in consortium activities (Anyaegbu&Wali 2019). Thus, inadequate institutional support in many institutions, particularly universities, dampens librarians' attitude, which is a crucial factor for participation in library consortia.

Librarians' attitudes are critical in the adoption and use of library consortia. Librarians need to display a good attitude towards the services they deliver in order to stir effective utilization. Bohner and Dickel (2011) in Awujoola, Olalekan, & Kathleen(2020) defined attitude as the evaluation of an object of thought. Attitudes affect both management and staff; however, the attitudes of the executives have a direct impact upon employees. Employees sense the institution managers' attitudes and respond accordingly. The attitude of librarians significantly affects the adoption of any new library system or technology (Dahiru&Bala, 2024).

Consortium adoption and utilization could be a direct reflection of institutional support. University libraries in South-East, just like their counterparts in other regions in Nigeria, seem to be lagging behind in taking full advantage of the potential in consortium to address the challenges that are hindering their libraries. Librarians in South-East Nigeria seem not to be interested in going into library consortia, maybe due to their attitude probably caused by very poor institutional support.

This researcher assumes that lack of institutional support is responsible for the negative attitude of academic librarians towards engaging in consortium activities in the South-East geo-political zone, Nigeria. This study, however, examines institutional support as a possible predictor of librarians' attitude to consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Since the emergence of the 21st century, the task of providing information materials in different formats to answer the needs of library users has become harder; hence, academic libraries in different parts of the world have discovered collaboration and resource sharing, known today as consortium, as an avenue to achieve the goals of providing information resources to their users. Despite the opportunities that abound in the library consortium, the idea seems not to have worked among libraries in South-East Nigeria. Notwithstanding, the increasing emphasis on collaboration through the library consortium, it appears that very poor attention has been given to it by librarians within the academic libraries in the region. Even when the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) and the National Universities Commission formed the Nigerian University Libraries Consortium (NULIB) in 2014 to facilitate the consortium, it could not stand the test of time.

The correlation between institutional support and the resulting influence on the attitude of librarians to consortium has become an area of inquiry requiring exploration. There is a gap in understanding the role of institutional support in influencing librarians' attitudes towards participating in or forming consortia within university libraries.

Current literature lacks comprehensive research on how support from institutions interacts and impacts librarians' engagement in consortium activities. This gap in knowledge hinders the ability of librarians to participate and sustain consortium initiatives as valuable assets for enhancing library services and optimizing resource utilization. Hence, this study will assess whether institutional support predicts librarians' attitude towards participating in or forming consortiums in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine institutional support as predictor of librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to find out if:

1. access to training predicts librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.
2. institutional infrastructure support predicts librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.

3. financial supports predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance;

1. Access to training does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.
2. Institutional infrastructure support does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.
3. Financial support does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

The concept of a consortium is defined by Nworie and Unegbu (2014), as a group of organizations that come together to fulfill a combined objective that usefully requires cooperation, the sharing of resources, and to having a clear mutual goal in order to ensure their success. The aim of consortium is to deliver 'more than the sum of the individual parts'. Jerome, Esse and Odeshi (2016) see library consortiums as the coming together of two or more libraries in a formal agreement to share their resources. A library consortium is formed to realize the benefits and opportunities of collaborative activity. It is a comparative alliance of libraries to share human and information resources.

The main driving force for collaboration among libraries, especially university libraries, has been the increase in the number of publications and the rise in the cost of publications as well as the decline in library budgets. The increase in student enrolment in universities and the increasing demands for library services and collections were other factors given by Darko-Ampen (2002) as responsible for the collaborative efforts. There were instances of several libraries coming together voluntarily for the mutual benefit of respective users, just like cooperatives. It was the earliest stage of library cooperation. In the second stage, computerized networks came in vogue for sharing resources. Till this period, the library resources were mainly in traditional printed format. With networks created through bibliographical databases, users of

the participating libraries today could get the required documents from other libraries through document delivery services.

With the advent of e-resources, the concept of consortia is rooted mainly for acquisition of e-journals, so it has become possible for the users to access and download the required materials without even going through the elaborate process of inter-library lending. Libraries, especially academic libraries have long formed consortia for the purpose of sharing existing physical resources principally books and journals held by member libraries. Library consortia do not have any remarkable history but the consortia arrangement started with the concept of resource sharing long back. In the mid 90's, new types of library consortia began to flourish that exploited the advancements in information technology.

Organizational Support Theory (OST)

This study adopted Organizational Support Theory (OST) which was originally proposed by organizational psychologists Robert Eisenberger, Julianne Snyder, and Patrick S. Malone in the late 1980s. The theory was developed to understand the impact of perceived organizational support (POS) on employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance within the workplace.

The primary focus of organizational support theory is to examine the extent to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions, cares about their well-being, and supports their professional development. This belief in organizational support has been shown to have significant implications for employee motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and performance.

The theory suggests that prioritizing and creating a supportive work environment can contribute to the well-being and mental health of employees, leading to a more positive and healthy workforce. This strengthens organizational culture. By fostering a culture of support and appreciation, organizations build a strong sense of community, teamwork, and collaboration among employees.

The principles of organisational Support Theory (OST) are closely intertwined with the study of institutional support for librarians as they underscore the importance of creating a supportive work environment that enhances librarian competence, engagement and performance.

When employees perceive that their organizations value and support them, they are more likely to perform well and exhibit positive attitudes towards their work.

In the context of librarianship and consortium participation, institutional support plays a crucial role in shaping librarians' attitudes towards collaboration, cooperation, and joint endeavors. Institutions that provide support for collaboration, networking, and partnership initiatives create an environment where librarians are encouraged and empowered to engage in consortium activities. When institutions value and prioritize consortium participation as part of their organizational culture, librarians are more likely to view consortiums positively and be open to participating in collaborative ventures.

The principles of OST further believe that institutional support contributes to librarians' sense of competence, empowerment, and motivation, which in turn shapes their attitude towards consortium participation. Institutions that invest in the professional development, training, and resources necessary for successful collaboration within consortiums demonstrate a commitment to equipping librarians with the skills and knowledge needed to engage effectively in joint projects. This support enhances librarians' confidence in their abilities to contribute meaningfully to consortium activities and fosters a positive attitude towards collaboration.

Support from institution plays a crucial role in fostering a culture of teamwork, communication, and mutual respect among librarians, which are essential components of successful consortium participation. Institutions that encourage open communication, knowledge sharing, and collaborative decision-making create a supportive environment in which librarians can work together effectively with consortium partners. When librarians feel supported by their institution in their collaborative efforts, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards consortium participation and actively engage in joint projects.

Theoretical Studies

Institutional support refers to the resources, structures, and assistance provided by educational organizations or institutions to the library and its personnel outside of their core terms of the agreement to improve their well-being, which can influence their commitment to the organization and have positive effects on the development of the library and its collection to meet the information demands of their patrons (Alana, 2007).

Previous studies have demonstrated that institutional support given to employees by their organization engenders improvement of positive behaviours and attitudes like affective and normative commitment, and sometimes on continuous commitment (Colakoglu, Culha&Atay, 2016). The amount of institutional support employees perceive from the organization has been proved to influence employees' job attitudes.

Attitudes are inclinations and feelings, prejudices or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, and convictions about something. It is a mental and neutral state of readiness organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects or situations with which it is associated (Ramzan, Asif, & Ahmad, 2021). From an individual perspective, a librarian's attitude refers to a person's overall proclivity and feelings, prejudices or bias, preconceived thoughts, ideas, worries, and convictions about a certain topic. A person's attitude toward a significant topic or object might be used to assess that person's feelings or thoughts about that topic.

Studies of employees' attitudes and behaviors have gained much importance to determine employees' possible attitude or commitment at the workplace. Institutional support induces feelings such as being important and being useful for the organization, and these feelings improve the personal function of employees. Fakhraei, Imami and Manuchehri (2015) argue that when employees feel satisfied and supported by their organization, they try to work better, feeling committed to the organization. In other words, institutional support plays a salient role in employees' attitude to work and employees' commitment to the organization of any type, including libraries or librarians.

In library consortium, institutional support is the collective resources, policies, and collaborative frameworks established among participating libraries to enhance their collective capacity, services, and efficiencies. Horton (2019) posited that this support can take place in various ways, including financial assistance, administrative assistance, infrastructure development, strategic planning, and capacity building initiatives, among others.

Institutional support within a library consortium strengthens the collective capabilities of participating libraries, fosters collaboration, and enables them to provide enhanced services and resources to their respective communities more efficiently and effectively. The relationship between institutional support and a librarian's attitude is symbiotic and influential. Institutional support can significantly shape a librarian's attitude, job satisfaction, and professional outlook,

while a librarian's attitude can also influence how they engage with and utilize institutional support. This relationship is manifest in different ways:

Support in the form of resources, recognition, and professional development opportunities, significantly impact librarians' job satisfaction. Van Wart and Kapucu(2019) notes that librarians who perceive higher levels of institutional support report greater job satisfaction. This support includes adequate staffing levels, access to training and development programs, supportive leadership, and a positive organizational culture (Fang & Yang, 2019). Second,institutions that invest in librarians' professional development contribute to their job satisfaction and overall attitude. Librarians value opportunities for continuous learning and skill development, and institutions that provide support in this regard foster a positive attitude among their staff (Vellucci, 2018). Professional development opportunities can include attending conferences, workshops, pursuing advanced degrees, or participating in mentorship programs.

Thirdly, the work environment, shaped by institutional policies, practices, and organizational culture, plays a crucial role in influencing librarians' attitudes. A supportive work environment, characterized by transparent communication, collaborative decision-making processes, and recognition of librarians' contributions, fosters a positive attitude among staff (Chen, 2018). Fourth, librarians' perception of institutional support significantly influences their attitude towards their job and workplace. Research suggests that librarians who perceive higher levels of support from their institutions are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes, higher job satisfaction, and increased organizational commitment (Wu et al., 2020).

Empirical Studies

Some scholars have studied various aspects of institutional support of librarians. A study by Iwu-James, et al. (2021) examined the influence of institutional support on the research productivity of academic librarians in South-West, Nigeria. The study found that academic librarians were not satisfied with the institutional support provided by their institutions. The majority of the librarians studied were responsible for funding their research expenses. The study also revealed that bureaucratic bottlenecks were considered a major hindrance to the librarians' access to institutional support. Also, the study found that the top three forms of support librarians considered likely to influence their research productivity were payment of article publication

fees, followed by sponsorship to attend workshops either within or outside the country and stipend to conduct research.

Similarly, Ajayi et al. (2021) investigated the institutional support employed for collection development practices in Private University Libraries in South-West Nigeria. The study found that institutional support had an impact on collection development practices. The predominant institutional support received was the prompt release of the library's budget allocation during accreditation, regular salary payment, and provision of work-related infrastructural facilities. Administrative bottlenecks and delayed institutional support until the accreditation period were the major obstacles to collection development practices in academic libraries. The study concluded by noting that institutions support is necessary to enhance collection development practices.

Babalola.and Allahmagani (2023) investigated the influence of research collaboration on librarian's research productivity in public universities in, North-West, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that librarians' research collaboration was to a high extent although research productivity was low. The study concludes that research collaboration had a positive and significant influence on research productivity of librarians in public universities in Northwest Nigeria.

Umar and Olubunmi (2021) studied institutional support and job satisfaction of librarians in federal university libraries in the North-East geopolitical zone, Nigeria. Findings of the study showed that institutional support of public universities have provided job satisfaction for library employees in North-East Nigeria. The study concludes that institutional support for job satisfaction of library employees is inevitable.

Folasade, Johnson and Ajibare (2024) explored influence of institutional support and digital competence on preservation and conservation practices among library personnel. The study found deficiencies in the areas of automation/maintenances and provision of infrastructural facilities. The test of hypotheses further revealed that institutional support has significant influence on digital preservation. The study confirmed a commendable level of institutional support within academic libraries. However, a notable gap was identified in the automation of processes and the provision of necessary technological infrastructure.

Researchers mentioned above have extensively explored the various facets of institutional support for librarians, including its influence on research productivity, collection development practices, job satisfaction, and job performance. However, a significant gap exists in the current literature, as no study has investigated the relationship between institutional support and librarians' attitudes towards consortium.

Despite the wealth of knowledge generated by these studies, they fail to address the critical issue of how institutional support influences librarians' attitudes towards consortium. This oversight is significant, as librarians' attitudes towards consortium can have far-reaching implications for the success of library consortia and the delivery of library services.

Therefore, there is a pressing need for research that explores the relationship between institutional support and librarians' attitudes towards consortium. This study would contribute meaningfully to the existing literature by shedding light on the factors that shape librarians' attitudes towards consortium and the role of institutional support in influencing these attitudes.

Research Method

Correlation research design was adopted for the study. Correlation seeks to establish what relationship exists between two or more variables, as well as indicating the direction and magnitude of relationship between the variables. The study was carried out in South-East Nigeria. South-East is made up of five states namely: Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Abia, and Ebonyi State. The population of the study consisted of one hundred and seventy-one (171) librarians in the five federal university libraries in South-East Nigeria. Due to the small size of the population, total enumeration was used for the study. A structured questionnaire titled "Institutional Support for Librarians Questionnaire (ISLQ)" was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was personally administered to the respondents with the help of four research assistants. The data generated from this study was analyzed using linear regressions and computed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSPS, V20). Where the P-value is less than the alpha level (P< 0.5), the null hypotheses were rejected; otherwise, where it is equal to or greater than the alpha level, the null hypotheses were accepted.

Results

Out of the 171 questionnaires distributed, 160 (93.57%) were duly completed and returned. Data collected were analysed and presented in tables below.

Hypothesis 1: Access to training does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.

Table 1

Simple linear regression on access to training as predictor of librarian's attitude towards consortium

Model	SS	df	MS	F	β	SE	t	Sig.
Regression	.783	1	.783	6.429	3.453	.148	23.299	.012b
Residual	19.248	158	.122					
Total	20.031	159						

The data in *Table 1* above show that access to training ($F(1, 158) = 6.429$, $\beta = 3.453$, $t = 23.299$, P (.012) < 0.05) significantly predicts librarian's attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria This means that access to training is statistically significant and predicts librarian's attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.; therefore, the first null hypothesis is rejected in the study. This outcome suggests that providing necessary training positively influences librarians' attitude to participate in consortia.

Hypothesis 2: Institutional infrastructure support does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.

Table 2

Simple linear regression on institutional infrastructure support as predictor of librarian's attitude towards consortium

Model	SS	df	MS	F	β	SE	t	Sig.
Regression	.693	1	.693	5.658	3.352	.116	28.919	.019b
Residual	19.338	158	.122					
Total	20.031	159						

The result in Table 2 above show that institutional infrastructure support ($F(1, 158) = 5.658$, $\beta = 3.352$, $t = 28.919$, P (.019) < 0.05) significantly predicts librarian's attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria: This outcome suggests that providing infrastructure support influences librarians' attitude to participate in consortia activities.

Hypothesis 3: Financial support does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria.

Table 3

Simple linear regression on institutional financial support as predictor of librarian's attitude towards consortium

Model	SS	df	MS	F	β	SE	t	Sig.
Regression	.693	1	.693	5.658	3.352	.116	28.919	.019b
Residual	19.338	158	.122					
Total	20.031	159						

Result in Table 3 above show that financial support ($F(1, 158) = 6.429$, $\beta = 3.219$, $t = 14.325$, P (.546) > 0.05) statistically does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria. This implied that institutional financial support statistically does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium in university libraries in South-East Nigeria. This suggests that financial support alone may not be enough to influence librarians' attitude towards consortium..

Discussion of findings

The study's findings showed that access to training is a significant predictor of librarians' attitude towards consortium. This shows that librarians who have access to training are more likely to have a positive attitude towards consortium. This finding aligns with the expectation that training enhances librarians' skills and knowledge, leading to a more positive attitude towards consortium. Corroborating the findings of the study, Ilesanmi (2023), noted that training is essential for librarians' ability to adapt to new technologies and innovations, including consortium. This means that training enables librarians to develop the necessary skills and competences to participate effectively in consortium.

The finding of the study also reveals that institutional infrastructure support is a significant predictor of librarians' attitude towards consortium. This indicates that librarians who work in institutions with adequate infrastructure support are more likely to have a positive attitude towards consortium. This also highlights the importance of providing librarians with the necessary infrastructure and technologies to support their work in a consortium. This present finding is in line with the assertion of Tella and Oyedapo (2017), that institutional infrastructure support is crucial for librarians' ability to access and utilize ICT-based resources.

However, the findings of study show that institutional financial support does not significantly predict librarians' attitude towards consortium. This suggests that financial support alone may not be enough to influence librarians' attitude towards consortium. These findings may indicate that other factors, such as training and infrastructure support, play a more significant role in shaping librarian's attitudes towards consortium. This finding is in contrast to the views of Iwu-James, et al. (2021) that the top three forms of institutional support librarians consider likely to influence their productivity were payment of an article publication fee, sponsorship to attend conferences either within or outside the country, and a stipend to conduct research.

Conclusion

Given the rising costs of library materials and limited budgets, the importance of library consortium cannot be over-emphasized. As such, library consortium plays a crucial role in the modern libraries landscape as they come together to share resources, services, and expertise to improve their operations and efficiency. This study on institutional support as a predictor of librarians' attitude to consortium has revealed that institutional support is a significant predictor of librarians' attitude towards consortium. As a result, this study concluded that access to training and institutional infrastructure support is key factors that can enhance librarians' attitude to consortium. This suggests that libraries and institutions that provide adequate training and infrastructure support to librarians are more likely to have librarians with a positive attitude towards consortium.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. The university library management should conduct regular needs assessment to identify the training and development needs of librarians, and provide targeted support to enhance their participation in the consortium.

2. The university library management should prioritize adequate institutional support to librarians, including providing adequate infrastructure, training and other development programmes.

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