

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY OF LIBRARIANS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Purpose:

This study investigates the influence of interpersonal communication skills on the research productivity of librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria.

Design/ Methodology/Approach:

A descriptive survey research design was employed, with a population of 116 professional librarians across tertiary institutions in Osun State. A structured questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms, yielding a 90% response rate. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at a significance level of 0.05.

Findings:

The study revealed that librarians in tertiary institutions possess a high level of interpersonal communication skills, with a grand mean score of 3.50 (SD = 0.42). Specific skills such as active listening, empathy, message interpretation, and effective response delivery were prominent. The analysis showed a positive and significant relationship ($r = 0.206$, $p < 0.05$) between interpersonal communication skills and research productivity.

Practical Implication:

The study underscores the significant influence of interpersonal communication skills on the research productivity of librarians in tertiary institutions. The findings highlight the critical role of interpersonal communication in enhancing librarians' research productivity. Institutions can improve research outputs by fostering these skills through targeted professional development programs, mentorship, and supportive institutional policies.

Originality/value:

This study fills a significant gap in the literature by empirically linking interpersonal communication skills to research productivity in the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Keywords: *Interpersonal communication skills, Research Productivity, Professional Librarians, Tertiary Institutions, Osun State Nigeria.*

Introduction

Libraries have long been the custodians of recorded information, tasked with the vital functions of collecting, processing, storing, retrieving, and disseminating knowledge. Historically, libraries represent one of humanity's earliest systems for managing information (Kadiri, 2014). They serve as repositories for a wide array of printed, non-printed, and creative materials, all transformed into accessible knowledge. Within this framework, university libraries are central to supporting the core objectives of their institutions—learning, teaching,

research, and service. The quality of academic output at universities is inextricably linked to the services provided by librarians, who play a pivotal role in curating resources for both existing and future academic programs (Aina, 2004).

The productivity of librarians, particularly their research productivity, represents a key measure of their contributions to the academic ecosystem. Research productivity, defined as the output generated through scholarly activities, has grown in importance as the traditional

scholarly information lifecycle transitions into a digital paradigm. This shift demands proficiency in managing frameworks for information creation, distribution, assessment, and preservation. Concurrently, the reduction in government funding for academia and the heightened competition for external funding compel higher education administrators to emphasize faculty research output. Libraries, positioned at the intersection of these trends, have adopted strategic roles in advancing research and scholarly communication through cost-effective and accessible models (Hollister & Jensen, 2022).

Research productivity is commonly evaluated based on the quality and quantity of academic outputs produced within a specific period. These outputs include publications such as textbooks, journal articles, conference proceedings, monographs, bibliographies, and indexes (Okonodo, Popoola, Emmanuel, & Bamigboye, 2015). Beyond these traditional outputs, librarians are increasingly engaged in research-related services such as managing institutional repositories, promoting open access, handling research data, and offering bibliometric and digital scholarship services. These activities align with the evolving demands of academic librarianship, which continues to expand as a field of professional practice (Anyoogu & Iyabo, 2014).

While the value of research productivity is well-documented, recent studies reveal declining outputs among librarians in Nigerian universities (Okoye & Ejikeme, 2011). This trend raises concerns, given that research and publication remain foundational elements of academic librarianship, critical not only for professional advancement but also for sustaining the field's relevance and resilience (Simons, 2021). Addressing this challenge

requires adopting diverse strategies to meet user demands, particularly in an era where information technologies have become integral to library operations.

Effective interpersonal communication skills play a crucial role in addressing these challenges and enhancing productivity within libraries. Communication, derived from the Latin *commūnicāre* ("to share" or "to impart"), is the exchange of ideas, information, and plans to foster understanding and decision-making (Bakar, Shah, & Xu, 2020; Zakaria, 2017). Within organizational contexts, communication can flow in various patterns—downward (from superiors to subordinates), upward (from subordinates to superiors), and horizontal (between colleagues at similar levels) (Erdil, 2016). Each pattern facilitates specific organizational functions, ranging from disseminating instructions to fostering collaboration. DeVito (2015) categorizes communication into distinct forms, such as intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and computer-mediated communication. Among these, interpersonal communication is particularly relevant to libraries, as it involves the dynamic and ongoing process of interaction between two or more individuals, shaping relationships and facilitating mutual understanding (Gremler, 2001). Effective interpersonal communication is critical for librarians, as it directly impacts user satisfaction, engagement, and the overall success of library services (Azizah, Angraini, & Ulfa, 2023).

In university libraries, the interplay between interpersonal communication skills and job performance is evident in the quality of services delivered to meet users' information needs (Ifidon & Ugwuanyi, 2013). Research highlights poor communication as a significant factor in user dissatisfaction, underscoring the need for

stronger relationships between librarians and their patrons (Kaya et al., 2019). Consequently, enhancing interpersonal communication skills is imperative for librarians to adapt to the evolving demands of the information age, improve service delivery, and foster greater productivity and patronage.

This study explores the relationship between librarians' interpersonal communication skills and their research productivity, particularly in the context of tertiary institutions. Understanding these dynamics is essential for addressing contemporary challenges and promoting the effectiveness of university libraries in fulfilling their academic and societal roles.

Research Questions.

1. What level of interpersonal communication skills are possessed by librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria?
2. What are the interpersonal communication skills possessed by librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses will be tested in the study at a 0.05 level of significance:

H1: There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal communication skills and the research productivity of librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Globally, there has been a notable surge in scientific and scholarly publishing, influenced by an evolving academic

landscape characterized by a new generation of researchers, enhanced research collaboration, improved funding opportunities, and institutional incentive systems. This progression has also led to an expansion in scholarly journals, proceedings, and book series, fostering a broader platform for research dissemination (Larsen & von Ins, 2010). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014) underscores a significant increase in the global researcher population, which Kyvik and Aksnes (2015) attribute to higher qualifications and improved academic behavior.

Within this context, librarians' research productivity has become a focal point. Research productivity is understood as the totality of scholarly output generated by librarians through research activities, encompassing both the volume and quality of their work. According to Okonedo, Popoola, Emmanuel, and Bamigboye (2015), research productivity is frequently associated with terms like publication output, publication productivity, and knowledge productivity. As a process, it reflects the continuous contributions of academics to the existing body of knowledge (Okafor, 2011). As a product, it encapsulates the research outputs produced over a defined period, including journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings.

Research has consistently highlighted the importance of librarians' research output for career advancement. In Nigeria, promotion criteria for librarians emphasize the publication of high-quality articles in reputable journals and conference proceedings (Oluruntoba & Ajayi, 2006). Baro and Ebhomeya (2012) emphasize that librarians must recognize publication as a professional imperative, aligning with the practices of academic staff across Nigerian universities. An exploratory study by Kennedy, Brancolini, and Kennedy (2020) of

accomplished librarian-researchers highlights the significance of institutional support, research networks, and extrinsic rewards, such as salary increments and promotion, in fostering research productivity. These findings illustrate that an enabling research environment, including collaboration and institutional expectations, contributes significantly to the research accomplishments of librarians.

The evolving role of librarians in higher education underscores the importance of communication, especially in aligning with trends such as digital scholarship, user-centered services, and open access initiatives (Hollister & Jensen, 2022). Effective communication, as defined by Daniel (2013, 2016), is a two-way process of information sharing that culminates in mutual understanding and coordinated action. Within academic libraries, communication facilitates cataloging, classification, reference services, and user interactions, ultimately supporting the library's overarching objectives.

Interpersonal communication, a critical dimension of organizational interaction, involves verbal and non-verbal exchanges that shape relationships and foster collaboration (Reich & Hershcovis, 2011). The success of reference services, for instance, relies heavily on the communication skills of librarians during user interactions, such as reference interviews (Igbinovia & Solanke, 2015). Similarly, Peter and Florence (2014) highlight the role of effective communication in cataloging and classification processes, ensuring that resources are systematically organized for optimal accessibility. Despite the recognized importance of communication skills, challenges persist. Hamid and Younus (2021) found that librarians in public libraries often lack adequate communication proficiency, with minimal variation across demographic traits. Institutional constraints,

limited training opportunities, and insufficient recognition of librarians' roles in research further impede the development of communication skills (Luo, 2017).

To address these barriers, scholars such as Powel, Baker, and Mika (2018) advocate for targeted professional development programs. These initiatives aim to equip librarians with the skills needed to effectively engage diverse stakeholders, navigate complex academic environments, and enhance research productivity. Interpersonal communication skills are central in the dynamic relationship between librarianship and research productivity. By fostering effective communication, academic libraries can cultivate an environment conducive to research excellence, collaboration, and innovation, ensuring that librarians remain integral to the academic ecosystem.

Despite the wealth of research on interpersonal communication skills and librarians' productivity, a notable absence persists concerning studies that integrate the variables. Furthermore, the level of interpersonal communication skills among librarians and empirical works on librarians' productivity in universities in Osun state remain understudied. These identified gaps serve as a clarion call for the present study to contribute substantively to the scholarly discourse, filling these voids with valuable insights and enriching the existing body of knowledge.

Research Methods

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design to describe the relationship that exists between the identified variables in the study. The populations of this study are the 116 professional librarians in the selected tertiary institutions in Osun state, Nigeria. A total number of 116 copies of the questionnaire were distributed via Google form among librarians in the seventeen (17)

tertiary institutions' libraries. The data collected for this study were analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) 22. In the same way, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical method will be used to test the null hypotheses. The null hypotheses that were formulated for this study were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation and analysis of Data

A total of 116 copies of the research instrument were administered to the respondents via google form to professional librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, out of which 104 (90%) was returned and found suitable for analysis.

Table 1. level of interpersonal communication skills possessed by librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria

Interpersonal Communication Skills	VH	H	L	VL	N	MEAN \bar{x}	SD	DECISION
To what extent do you believe you possess strong listening skills when interacting with library users?	61 (58.7%)	43 (41.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	104	3.59	0.495	Very High
How would you rate your ability to communicate fluently and effectively with library users?	43 (41.3%)	61 (58.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	104	3.41	0.495	High
Rate your level of empathy and ability to handle users' emotions during interactions in the library environment.	44 (42.3%)	60 (57.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	104	3.42	0.496	High
How confident are you in your ability to accurately interpret users' messages and understand their information needs?	63 (60.6%)	41 (39.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	104	3.61	0.491	Very High
Please rate your capability to comprehend users' queries and provide satisfactory responses to their information needs.	52 (50%)	51 (49%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	104	3.49	0.521	High
Rate your ability to provide guidance to users properly after listening to their query	57 (54.8%)	47 (45.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	104	3.55	0.500	Very High
Grand \bar{x}						3.50	0.42	High

Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

From the result of the findings, the mean and the standard deviation shows the interpersonal communication skills

possessed by librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria. This was shown with the total average mean score of (Grand \bar{x} = 3.50, SD=0.42). The result implied that all

the respondents has high level of interpersonal communication skills.

Table 2: Interpersonal Communication Skills Possessed by the librarians.

Good listening Skill	SA	A	D	SD	N	MEAN	SD	DECISION
I possess active listening skill	76(73.1%)	28(26.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.73	.446	Strongly Agreed
I have the ability to provide guidance to users properly after listening to their query	73(70.2%)	31(29.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.70	.460	Strongly Agreed
I demonstrate actively the ability to listen and understand the information needs of library users	80(76.9%)	24(23.1%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.77	.423	Strongly Agreed
I exhibit patience and attentiveness while listening to users inquiries and request	76(73.1%)	28(26.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.73	.446	Strongly Agreed
Ability to speak fluently								
I adapt my speech pattern and language complexity to match the comprehension levels and preferences of different users	36(34.6%)	68(65.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.35	.478	Agreed
I can effectively convey complex ideas and information in a clear manner	49(47.1%)	55(52.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.47	.502	Agreed
I usually maintain smooth flow of conversation and avoid hesitations during interactions with users	59(56.7%)	45(43.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.57	.498	Strongly Agreed
I can articulate information fluently during interaction with users	58(55.8%)	46(44.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.56	.499	Strongly Agreed
Empathy and Emotional handling skills								
I demonstrate empathy towards users during communication interactions	51(49%)	53(51%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.49	.502	Agreed

I exhibit sensitivity and understanding towards users emotions and concerns during interactions	53(51%)	51(49%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.51	.502	Strongly Agreed
I provide appropriate reassurance and support to users who may be experiencing difficulties or frustration	45(43.3%)	59(56.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.57	.498	Strongly Agreed
I express genuine concern and compassion when addressing user inquiries or requests	65(62.5%)	39(37.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.63	.486	Strongly Agreed
Message interpretation Skills								
I poses the ability to serve users with the right information	65(62.5%)	39(37.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.63	.486	Strongly Agreed
I demonstrate an understanding of users' information needs beyond their explicit requests	73(70.2%)	31(29.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.70	.460	Strongly Agreed
I demonstrate effective interpretation by paraphrasing and summarizing user queries to ensure understanding	67(64.4%)	37(35.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.64	.481	Strongly Agreed
I can effectively decipher the underlying meaning or intent behind users' questions or statements	58(55.8%)	46(44.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.56	.499	Strongly Agreed
Ability to understand and satisfactorily responds to user queries								
I respond accurately to underlying messages conveyed by users during communication exchange	65(62.5%)	39(37.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.63	.486	Strongly Agreed
I have the ability to understand and satisfactorily give responses to users' queries	67(64.4%)	37(35.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.64	.481	Strongly Agreed
I have the ability to send the users response to their query using appropriate channel	74(71.2%)	30(28.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.71	.455	Strongly Agreed

I tailor my responses to match the language proficiency and comprehension levels of users	72(71.2%)	32(30.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	104	3.69	.464	Strongly Agreed
Grand \bar{x}						3.61	0.48	Strongly Agreed

Researcher’s Field Survey, 2024

From the result of the findings, the mean and the standard deviation shows the interpersonal communication skills possessed by librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria. This was shown with the total average mean score of (Grand \bar{x} = 3.61, SD=0.48). The result implied that all

the respondents possess high level of interpersonal communication skills.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between interpersonal communication skills and research productivity of librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 3: PPMC of interpersonal communication skills and research productivity of the librarians.

Variables	N	Means	SD	r.-value	P	Remark
Interpersonal communication skills	104	72.27	7.12	0.206**	0.036	Sig.
Research productivity	104	14.17	3.81			

Researcher’s Field Survey, 2024

The correlation of coefficient obtained was 0.206 with p-value <0.05. The result showed positive correlation between interpersonal communication skills and research productivity of librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria. There was a positive significant relationship between the variables as indicated in the above table as (r=0.206, N=104, P<0.05). Hence, null hypothesis two is rejected. This indicates that there is significant relationship between interpersonal communication skills and research productivity of Librarians' in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria.

between interpersonal communication skills and research productivity among librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that librarians in the region possess a high level of interpersonal communication skills, which include listening, empathy, fluent articulation, and effective message interpretation. The study also established a significant positive relationship between interpersonal communication skills and research productivity. These results underscore the critical role of communication in fostering a conducive environment for scholarly activities.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship

The implication of these findings is that interpersonal communication skills not only enhance librarians' ability to effectively

engage users but also contribute to their research productivity. Librarians who excel in communication are better equipped to navigate the complexities of academic environments, collaborate with stakeholders, and deliver impactful research outputs. By fostering stronger communication competencies, librarians can significantly elevate the quality of library services and their professional contributions to the academic community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the interpersonal communication skills and research productivity of librarians:

1. Institutions should organize regular training and workshops focusing on advanced communication techniques, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills. Such programs should be tailored to address the specific challenges librarians face in their professional interactions.
2. Establishing mentorship programs where experienced librarians guide less experienced colleagues can help develop interpersonal communication skills. Mentors can provide practical insights into effective communication strategies and research best practices.
3. Professional development courses should emphasize communication as a core competency. This integration would ensure that librarians are equipped to handle diverse user needs and complex academic demands effectively.
4. Tertiary institutions should invest in communication technologies that facilitate efficient interaction with library users. Tools such as collaborative platforms, virtual reference services, and user-friendly digital interfaces can enhance both

communication and research activities.

5. Institutions should implement incentive structures, such as grants, awards, and recognition programs, to motivate librarians to enhance their research output. Encouraging collaborative research among librarians can also foster teamwork and improve interpersonal communication.

By addressing these areas, tertiary institutions in Osun State can maximize the potential of their librarians, ensuring that they remain vital contributors to the academic and societal missions of their institutions. Enhanced communication skills will not only improve librarians' interaction with users but also empower them to achieve greater research productivity.

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