

PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE DOCUMENTATION BY
LIBRARY PERSONNEL IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Public libraries are not only expected to provide information resources and services to different categories of users in the society, they also need to preserve the culture and tradition of the people for the sake of posterity. Library personnel in the public libraries can carry out this responsibility through Indigenous Knowledge (IK) documentation. However, it might be difficult for librarians to give priority to IK documentation if they do not have a favourable perception and the appropriate attitude towards it. Therefore, this study empirically examined the perception and attitude of librarians towards IK documentation in public libraries in South-west, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted and data was collected with the use of a questionnaire. The population of this study consists of 126 library personnel in all the public libraries, in South-west, Nigeria. Due to the manageable number of the respondents, the total enumeration method was adopted. The data was analysed with the use of simple frequency and percentages, mean and standard deviation facilitated by the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS). Results revealed that most the respondents had a favourable perception of IK documentation as most of them ($\bar{x}=3.29$) felt that librarians in public libraries should be supported financially to document indigenous knowledge. Findings also revealed a positive attitude towards IK documentation by the library personnel with majority of them ($\bar{x}=3.27$) with the believe that documenting indigenous knowledge will enrich the library's collection. Therefore, library personnel in public libraries should serve as vanguards for IK documentation. Thus, management of public libraries should invest in continuous professional development for the staff.

Keywords: Perception, attitude, IK documentation, public libraries, Nigeria

Introduction

Public libraries are information centers that are established to address the information needs of everyone in a community, state and country regardless of the gender, level of education, social status and level of income. These are libraries that are closer to the communities and they are not only expected to provide information resources and services to different categories of users in the society, they also need to preserve the culture and tradition of the people for the sake of posterity (Ogunkeyede et. al., 2023). An importance component of the culture of the people that librarians in the public libraries need not to overlook is their Indigenous Knowledge also referred to as IK.

Kamboya (2018) defined IK as the local knowledge that is domiciled within a particular community. The author opined that IK is deeply rooted in the culture of the communities and it is usually an ancient form of knowledge as opposed to the scientific knowledge. Kamboya further pointed out that IK is peculiar to a community and it is sort that is accumulated over a period of time and it is usually passed on from generation to generation through the oral means of information. Therefore, the documentation of IK refers to the systematic way of identifying, collecting, processing, organising, preserving and dissemination of IK (Adebayo and Adeyemo, 2017). In order for the library personnel in the public libraries to effectively document IK, they need to display the appropriate attitude towards it.

Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) defined attitude as the disposition that an individual displays towards objects, concepts and behaviour based on appropriate standards as to whether it is good or bad. Attitude towards an object could be positive or negative. A positive attitude towards IK documentation by the library personnel in public libraries depicts that the library personnel are willing to document IK. On the other hand, a negative attitude towards IK documentation connotes that the library personnel do not see IK as important and as such might not engage in it.

Adeniji and Subair (2013) researched the documentation of IK resources by librarians in Oyo State, Nigeria. The library personnel that participated in the study were 90 from five libraries in Oyo State which were; Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Federal College of Education Library, Oyo, NISER Library, Ibadan, IITA Library, Ibadan and Oyo State Library Board, Dugbe. Results revealed that the library personnel from the public library (Oyo State Library Board) did not perform well in IK documentation like their counterparts from the other libraries. This could be an indication of their negative attitude towards IK documentation. A factor that could be a precursor to the type of attitude displayed towards IK documentation by library personnel in public libraries is their perception of IK.

Perception can be viewed as a mental image that an individual forms about a phenomenon which could be positive and negative. Salihu (2023) opined that perception has to do with how humans interpret and organise sensations to produce a realistic experience in the real world. This implies that whatever is perceived and how it is perceived can influence actions

displayed by individuals. Thus, there is the possibility that if the library personnel in public libraries have a positive perception of IK documentation, their attitude towards it will also be positive and vice versa. Thus, in order to empirically verify this postulation, this study examined perception and attitude towards indigenous knowledge documentation by librarians in public libraries in South-west, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the perception of librarians of indigenous knowledge documentation in public libraries in South-west, Nigeria?
2. What is the attitude of librarians towards indigenous knowledge documentation in public libraries in South-west, Nigeria?

Literature review

The documentation of indigenous knowledge ought to be prioritised by library personnel as it aligns with their responsibility of cultural preservation. Advancements in the field of science and technology in this Digital Age are not expected to negatively impact the documentation of indigenous knowledge. On the other hand, Hodder and Beckingham (2022) opined that the Digital Age presents limitless opportunities for library personnel to liaise with members of their community in the preservation and dissemination of culture by leveraging on digital repositories and online archiving. More specifically, Ogunkeyede *et al.* (2023) noted that the documentation of indigenous knowledge is one of the core mandates of library personnel in public libraries and as such they are expected to identify, collate and sort the various types of indigenous knowledge in their community.

Sarkhel (2016) averred that in order for library personnel to effectively document indigenous knowledge, they must have a positive perception towards it. This will not only trigger the right disposition but will also made them to be pro-active in developing strategies that will guarantee successful documentation of indigenous knowledge. The review of literature revealed that there seems to be very few empirical literature on the subject matter. However, the empirical literature that are found will be reviewed. Adebayo and Adeyemo (2017) examined the documentation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge by library personnel in selected research institutes in Nigeria. The researchers surveyed the views of 43 library personnel in five research institutes in Ibadan, Nigeria. Results showed that most of the respondents documented IK in the areas like; agriculture, folk tales, legends, history, herbal medicine, dressing and grooming and the likes. This proves that most of these library personnel had the proper perception and attitude towards IK documentation which has resulted in the documentation of different forms of IK.

Lazarus et. al. (2019) carried out a study on documentation of IK by librarians in seven academic libraries in Lagos State, Nigeria. Results showed that most of the respondents revealed the processes of documentation of IK as acquisition, codification, organisation, storage and preservation. This is an indication of their favourable perception and attitude towards IK documentation. Aliyu et. al. (2022) did a study on indigenous knowledge preservation in Nigeria with a focus on public libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 202 and results showed that most of the respondents 124 (61.4%) agreed that IK materials on medicine and healthcare were available in their libraries. More than half of the respondents 121 (59.9%) also noted that IK materials on agriculture were available in their libraries. This is an indication that most of the library personnel might have a positive perception and attitude towards IK documentation.

Chigwada and Ngulube (2024) studied the preservation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge by 20 librarians in Mashonaland West and Central. Results showed that all the librarians were involved in the acquisition, preservation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge. This is an indication that all the respondents had a favourable disposition to document IK, which was why they engaged in it. Seifi, Ghasemipoor and Syamili (2025) carried out a meta-analysis of the roles of librarians as stewards of indigenous knowledge. The researchers made use meta-synthesis of qualitative and quantitative resources on the subject matter and findings showed that prominent among the characteristics needed by the library personnel to document indigenous knowledge is the positive perception of IK they are expected to display.

Jev and Obande (2024) examined the perceived influence of dissemination of information resources on indigenous knowledge for sustainable agricultural development in Benue State, Nigeria. The population of the study included 123 library personnel and the questionnaire was one of the research instrument used for data collection. Findings showed that a high number of the library personnel noted that their libraries provided information resources to support indigenous agricultural development. This is a testament that the library personnel do not treat issues of indigenous knowledge with levity. The result also proved that the library personnel had a positive attitude towards indigenous knowledge documentation particularly one that has to do with agriculture.

Olayaki (2025) surveyed the perception of library personnel towards indigenous knowledge in Kwara State, Nigeria. The population included 110 library personnel from University of Ilorin, Al-Hikmah University and Kwara State University. The questionnaire was the data collection instrument and results showed that most of the respondents had a positive perception of indigenous knowledge. They were of the view that the documentation of indigenous knowledge which could be in the form of integrating it into the curriculum of educational institutions promotes cultural awareness and that of a sense of belonging among

marginalised groups. It can be deduced from this result that most of these library personnel view documentation of indigenous knowledge in a good light.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the Theory of Planned Behaviour propounded by Icek Ajzen in 1985. This theory proposes that behaviour is dependent on attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. The explanatory variables have a direct link with intention, which in turn affects behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2000). This theory relates to perception and attitude towards indigenous knowledge documentation by the library personnel. This is because perception of indigenous knowledge documentation, it is a significant determinant of attitude, which is a key variable in the theory that predicts intention and actual documentation of indigenous knowledge by the library personnel in the public libraries. In other words, there is a tendency that the library personnel in the public libraries will document indigenous knowledge if they have a positive mental image of its benefits (perception) and if they have the positive disposition towards it (attitude).

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used. The population of the study consists of all the library personnel in the six public libraries in South-west, Nigeria. According to the data collected from these libraries, the total number of library personnel is 126 (See Table 1). Due to the manageable number of the library personnel, the total enumeration method, also called census method was used. Thus, all the library personnel participated in the study. The questionnaire was the tool for data collection and it was developed from comprehensive review of literature on the subject matter. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A captures the demographic information with three questions. Section B collects data on perception of indigenous knowledge documentation by the library personnel and it contains one question with eight items. Section C focuses on attitude towards indigenous knowledge documentation by the library personnel and it consists of one question with ten items. The researchers distributed and retrieved completed copies of the instrument with the aid of trained research assistants and data was analysed with the use of frequency counts, mean and standard deviation. The Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) is the software used for the data analysis.

Table 1 Population of the study

S/N	Public Libraries	No of library personnel
1	Ekiti State Library Board, Ekiti State	14
2	Osun State Library Board, Osun State	14
3	Ogun State Library Board, Ogun State	24
4	Oyo State Library Board, Oyo State	37
5	Lagos State Library Board, Lagos State	20
6	Ondo State Library Board, Ondo State	17
	Total	126

Results and discussion**Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Table 3 presents the demographic information of the library personnel.

Table 3 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic variables	F	%
Gender		
Male	42	40.8
Female	61	59.2
Age		
21-30	11	10.7
31-40	21	20.4
41-50	34	33.0
51-60	18	17.5
61 and above	19	18.5
Designation		
Professional	45	43.7
Paraprofessional	58	56.3

N=103

Results showed that close to three-fifths of the library personnel 61 (59.2%) were female and the rest 42 (40.8%) were male. Findings revealed that most of the respondents 34 (33.0%) were between 41-50 years of age, while the least 11 (10.7%) were between 21-30 years of age. Majority of the library personnel 58 (56.3%) were paraprofessionals while the others 45 (43.7%) were professionals.

Answers to research questions

Research question one: What is the perception of library personnel of indigenous knowledge documentation in public libraries in South-west, Nigeria?

Table 4 presents the responses of the library personnel to the statements that were used to measure their perception of indigenous knowledge documentation.

Table 4 Perception of library personnel of indigenous knowledge documentation in public libraries in South-west, Nigeria

S/N	Statements	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	I feel the documentation of indigenous knowledge is part of the responsibilities of a librarian in the public library	20	19.4	64	62.1	12	41.7	7	6.8	2.94	.765
2.	I feel there is value in documenting indigenous knowledge	35	34.0	56	54.4	7	6.8	5	4.9	3.17	.760
3	I feel the documentation of indigenous knowledge can improve our lives in this Digital Age	24	23.3	70	68.0	9	8.7	-	-	3.15	.550
4	I feel that librarians in public libraries should be supported financially to document indigenous knowledge	38	36.9	59	57.3	4	3.9	2	1.9	3.29	.636
5	I feel that the management of public libraries should prioritise the documentation of indigenous knowledge	23	22.3	72	69.9	8	7.8	-	-	3.15	.532
6	I feel that the documentation of indigenous knowledge by public libraries can help draw attention to the usefulness of the libraries	40	38.8	55	53.4	8	7.8	-	-	3.13	.611
7	I feel that the documentation of indigenous knowledge by public libraries can help to attract foreign grants and assistance	26	25.2	73	70.9	4	3.9	-	-	3.21	.498
8	I feel that the documentation of indigenous knowledge by public libraries is part of the efforts to	24	23.3	65	63.1	10	9.7	4	3.9	3.06	.698

	preserve our future for posterity					
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Results revealed that most of the library personnel (\bar{x} =3.29) felt that librarians in public libraries should be supported financially to document indigenous knowledge. Also, a high number of the respondents (\bar{x} =3.21) were of the view that the documentation of indigenous knowledge by public libraries can help to attract foreign grants and assistance. Majority of the library personnel (\bar{x} =3.17) felt that there is value in documenting indigenous knowledge. Findings also showed that almost all the library personnel (\bar{x} =3.15) felt that the documentation of indigenous knowledge can improve human lives in this Digital Age. Thus, it can be deduced from this result that most of the library personnel had a positive perception of IK documentation in the public libraries in South-west, Nigeria. This result agrees with the findings of Lazarus et. al. (2019) who examined the documentation of IK by librarians in seven academic libraries in Lagos State, Nigeria and deductions from their findings showed that most of the respondents had a positive perception of IK documentation.

Research question two: What is the attitude of library personnel towards indigenous knowledge documentation in public libraries in South-west, Nigeria?

The attitude of the library personnel towards IK documentation is captured in Table 5.

Table 5 Attitude of library personnel towards indigenous knowledge documentation in public libraries in South-west, Nigeria

S/N	Statements	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	There is an urgent need to document indigenous knowledge to prevent it from extinction	26	25.2	63	61.2	9	8.7	5	4.9	3.07	.731
2.	Documenting indigenous knowledge will promote cultural understanding	25	24.3	70	68.0	8	7.8	-	-	3.17	.544
3	Indigenous knowledge is just as valuable as other forms of documented knowledge	32	31.1	65	63.1	5	4.9	1	1.0	3.24	.585
4	I believe that documenting indigenous knowledge will enrich the library's collection	41	39.8	49	47.6	13	12.6	-	-	3.27	.674
5	Public libraries should prioritise indigenous knowledge documentation	33	32.0	59	57.3	3	2.9	8	7.8	3.14	.805

6	Indigenous knowledge is not relevant today and there is no need for documentation	5 4.9	37 35.9	42 40.8	19 18.4	2.27 .819
7	Documenting indigenous knowledge is difficult due to its oral nature	6 5.8	10 9.7	49 47.6	38 36.9	1.84 .826
8	I believe the community may not be open to share their indigenous knowledge with outsiders	6 5.8	11 10.7	49 47.6	37 35.9	1.86 .829
9	It is a taboo to document indigenous knowledge	7 6.8	13 12.6	38 36.9	45 43.7	1.83 .901
10	The documentation of indigenous knowledge can lead to exploitation	5 4.9	4 3.9	46 44.7	48 46.6	1.67 .772

Findings revealed that most of the library personnel ($\bar{x}=3.27$) believed that documenting indigenous knowledge will enrich the library's collection. A very high number of the respondents ($\bar{x}=3.24$) noted that indigenous knowledge is just as valuable as other forms of documented knowledge. Majority of the library personnel ($\bar{x}=3.17$) were of the view that documenting indigenous knowledge will promote cultural understanding. In addition, a very high number of the respondents ($\bar{x}=1.67$) disagreed that the documentation of indigenous knowledge can lead to exploitation. Also, most of the library personnel ($\bar{x}=1.83$) also disagreed that the documentation of IK is considered a taboo. With these results, it can be concluded that the most of the library personnel displayed a positive attitude towards the documentation of IK in the public libraries in South-west, Nigeria. This finding corroborates with that of Chigwada (2023) who studied the preservation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge by librarians in Mashonaland West and Central and results showed that all the respondents had a favourable attitude to document IK.

Conclusion

The usefulness of IK in health, agriculture, weather forecasting, education and other aspects of human lives are undeniable even in this age of artificial intelligence. In order to ensure the continued relevance of IK in the immediate and for posterity, it must be documented, failure of which, might be lost in the course of time. Library personnel in public libraries are in a unique position to serve as vanguards of indigenous knowledge documentation because of their close relationship with the people and their culture. In order to facilitate this, these library personnel must feel that IK is worth documenting and they need to display a favourable disposition towards it.

Library personnel in the public libraries who do not view the documentation of indigenous knowledge as important and who do not have the right disposition towards it might

fail to connect with their local community and as such, they will find it difficult to assert their relevance. In addition, these library personnel would also miss out on the opportunities for research into the unique indigenous knowledge systems in their communities, which if documented might not only benefit the community, but the global society. Thus, library personnel' perception and attitude are essential in the documentation of IK, thereby upholding and validating the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. In order to sustain and strengthen the positive perception and attitude of the library personnel towards IK documentation, management of the public libraries should invest in the professional development of the personnel in the area of IK, through attendance at conferences, workshops and seminars. The more the library personnel are knowledgeable about the relevance of IK documentation, the more their perception and attitude will be positive.
2. The management of public libraries can also sustain the positive perception and attitude of the library personnel towards IK documentation by allocating funds in the budget purposely for this purpose. This will enable the library personnel to do the necessary logistics and also motivate the library personnel to view IK documentation as important.
3. The professional association, the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) should also place IK at the centre stage in seminars, workshops and conferences. This will encourage library personnel to present papers on the subject matter and encourage knowledge transfer through the discussions that will take place after presentation of papers.

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