

Pastoral Psychology in Education for Sustainable Development

A Book of Readings
in honour of

Prof.
Donald Abidemi
ODELEYE

Edited by
Prof. Babatunde Adeniyi Adeyemi
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for
Sustainable Development**

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Prof. Donald Abidemi ODELEYE

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Librarians' Awareness of Information Ethics in Service Delivery in Private University Libraries in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Information evolution with advancement in information technological tools has increased the risk of librarians upholding the professional code of ethics. The present study aims at ascertaining the level of librarians' awareness of ethics of information for service delivery and identifying the ethical issues in information service delivery among librarians in private Universities, specifically, Osun State. The study adopted a survey design while questionnaire was administered to 81 librarians in the 15 private universities. Data was analyzed using frequency distribution. The study revealed increasing consciousness of professionals on intellectual property rights, information accuracy, confidentiality, and privacy, as ethics of information to be ensured when delivering services. However, challenges such as equity in access to and use of information, issues of copyright, plagiarism, and providing accurate information were identified to impede effective information service delivery. Thus, increasing awareness on the need for librarians to be guided by information ethics, through training and local policies is recommended.

Keywords: Ethics, information, service delivery, librarians, universities

Introduction

In recent times, developments in technologies have transformed the process of delivering library and information services in libraries around the world. Academic libraries, especially, have witnessed a technological revolution that has helped to broaden the walls of libraries' operation and services in the last few years (Yusuf & Farouk, 2017). As a result, a growing number of library resources have been transformed from physical to electronic (Bell, 2009). Thus, raising the issues of awareness and conforming to ethical standards for delivering information services in the library, especially with the availability of a wide range of information delivery channels present with the electronic resources.

Libraries as the storehouse of knowledge are established to achieve set goals and objectives including making information available and accessible to users. These goals are further guided by professional standards of conduct known as Ethics. Ethics are professional standards of handling responsibilities and assignments by trained personnel in specific fields of study. Ethics of information professions have to do with applying moral standards to the general conduct of librarians, information scientists, and others in the distribution and dissemination of information (Hoq, 2020). Ethical matters in the information profession are those related to information dissemination and use such as intellectual property, information access, intellectual freedom, censorship, collection development, and problem patrons (Mabawonku, 2010; Fergunson, 2016; Hoq, 2020). The effectiveness of a library can be determined by its success with service delivery to patrons and clientele and satisfying user's information needs. This however can be effectively

achieved with careful compliance with guiding principles for information professionals. Library and information professionals, as providers of information, thus require awareness of the rising complexity in ethical issues and values manifested through the relationship between the professional duties and society.

The university library aims at the advancement of the functions of its parent body by carrying out its activities efficiently. One of such activities is the acquisition and organization of information resources. Librarians in academic libraries, consequently have a responsibility to uphold the values of the profession and ensure that the information they provide is accurate, reliable, and available equally to all library users. These values are often embedded in the numerous concepts of information and professional ethics called the code of ethics. A code of ethics is a list of principles that guides the ethical behavior of professionals, such as librarians, as they carry out their responsibilities (Onoyeyan et al., 2014). Ethical codes for Librarians are mainly provided as a benchmark to guide the behaviour of library and Information professionals and safeguard them from ethical misconduct. However, this code of ethical practice among professional librarians has changed over time (Graff, Quiñonez-Riegos, Scott & Senior, 2020). Since information ethics is considered as one of the major people-centered competencies every professional librarian should possess (Talwar, 2014; Madu & Dawha, 2019). Librarians need to be aware of and understand the code of ethics of information for effective service delivery and their implications on their actions. Knowledge of these values with a commitment to upholding individual and collective responsibilities towards knowledge access and provision; doing right and upholding professionalism form the foundation to quality service delivery.

Librarians as custodians of information are expected to deliver information services to users following ethical guidelines of the profession. However, the reaction of some library users, on how information services are delivered in academic libraries in the country suggests that librarians and information professionals seem not to adhere to the code of ethics of the profession. The reasons for this were adduced to lack of awareness, little knowledge of the field of information ethics, or lackadaisical attitude to providing effective services (Igbeka & Okoroma, 2013; Ndumbaro & Mutula, 2020). Though librarians are expected to ensure that ethical principles such as intellectual freedom, information privacy, equitable access, intellectual property among others are followed, in the dissemination and use of information. Most of the time, Librarians faced with an ethical dilemma that can only be effectively solved with good knowledge of the ethics of delivering information services.

These circumstances necessitate research on awareness of ethical issues in information service delivery and knowledge of ethical skills acquisitions for older and newly employed librarians to enable them to improve their capabilities in information service delivery. Hence, this study examines the level of librarians' awareness of ethical issues in information service delivery as it affects effectiveness in delivering information services to provide a lasting solution to the challenge of effectiveness and efficiency in delivering information services in academic libraries in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This paper specifically seeks to:

- i. ascertain the level of librarians' awareness of ethics of information for service delivery in private Universities in Osun state;
- ii. identify the ethical issues in information service delivery among Librarians in private universities in Osun state.

Review of Related Literature

Ethics of Information for Service Delivery in Academic Libraries

Ethics involves both authorized and moral approaches to doing things correctly and acceptably. Ethics is a system of moral principles that influences peoples' decisions (Kathleen, Olawale & Olaide, 2018). Ethics essentially deals with the values, principles, practices, and qualities that distinguish what is right from wrong (Bhattacharjee, 2012). It is the value given to information when it is generated, processed, used, and transferred. The aspect of ethics that concentrates on professionals such as librarians is referred to as Professional ethics (Kathleen, Olawale & Olaide, 2018). Mabawonku (2010) described the information profession ethics as principles that direct the conduct of members to make sure they adhere to the accepted standards. Ethics of information professions regulate the actions of librarians on who should have access to what information.

For Librarians, ethics of information concentrates on information privacy, intellectual freedom, intellectual property, censorship, collection development, ownership and copyright, equal and unbiased access to information, accessibility, censorship, digital divide, and complicated clienteles (Hauptman, 2010; Fergunson, 2016; Steele, 2018). Information ethics provides a logical framework for considering moral issues concerning informational privacy, new environmental issues, and problems arising from the information life cycle, such as creation, collection, recording, and processing of information (Buchanan and Henderson, 2009; Ocholla, 2013).

Among many library operations and several factors that influence the fulfillment of library users, service delivery quality was identified as the most important (Kullarni & Deshpande, 2012). Thus, continuous improvement on the quality of services offered to library patrons will help in ensuring effective library operations. One of such ways of improving service quality, which has become significant for librarians, is acquiring knowledge about the principles that guide the provision of the needed information to meet the expectations of library users. This can be easily and better achieved when librarians are well informed of the ethics of information in delivering library services. Thus, LIS professionals need to be aware of the ethical principles to tackle the increasing complexity in the trending system of information service delivery. With the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on our local and global communities, libraries of all types are making hard choices on services to offer and how to do so. Libraries in developed and developing countries including Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana have now either fully or partially embraced the digital service delivery system. For instance, China, Korea, and Malaysia have reinforced and promoted the National digital library to deal with the increase in demand for information services (Torres, 2020; Reed & Thompson, 2021).

Ethics of information service delivery consider the principles, attributes, values, and practices that characterize the right process and procedure for providing and exchanging information and delivering information by librarians. These right processes and procedures have been provided in form of rules referred to as ethical codes. According to Aulisio (2013), ethical codes are principles and values that librarians can depend on, to avoid choosing between obeying copyright rules and attending to users' needs. Prominent international and national library and information associations like the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and American Library Association (ALA) have established ethical codes (Abioye, Zaid, & Olatise, 2012; Munigal, 2018) which are adopted by the library and information professionals around the world, including the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) in guiding their discharge of professional duties. Some of these codes have commonly held values and are discussed below.

Information Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy concerns have been of much relevance since ancient Greek times (Rotenberg, 2015), and are still very much valuable in today's dealings especially in an organisation that handle information like the library. Privacy and confidentiality are key principles for library and information science professionals (Ferguson, 2016). Privacy is considered as a condition of not publicizing personal knowledge, undocumented or unpublished information materials (Holmer, 2000). The library as an organization in charge of providing useful information that will meet the need of users is very particular about the privacy of the users of information. Nevertheless, technological advancement has allowed for digital content delivery that puts library users' privacy at risk. For instance, Acquisti, et al. (2015) reported that the digitization and provision of access to library resources electronically and on the web, has greatly increased the potential risk to the privacy of those represented in the materials. Thus, information ethics provides a critical background for considering moral and legal issues relating to information privacy in new and changing environments (Ocholla, 2013; Floridi, 2013; Sravani, Shoba & Ahammad, 2016). Librarians are therefore expected to protect library user's right to privacy by ensuring the confidentiality of information requested or received, and resources accessed or spread. CILIP for instance produced a statement on the privacy and ethical implications of COVID-19 on service delivery (IFLA, 2020). This was to guide against unethical practices.

Wilkinson (2014) argued that despite the professional guidance given by codes of ethics, they do not provide information on what moral decisions are to be taken when delivering services to the patrons. Thus, when librarians are faced with difficult situations in delivering library and information services, they are to be motivated by a sense of duty, impending consequence of their actions, and respect for patron's rights and also consider the subject of virtue (Fallis, 2007). Wilkinson (2014) added that they strengthen the ethical codes with a rational decision. Similarly, librarians are advised to entrench their ethical perspective positions in technological designs, practices, and governance mechanisms (Jones & Salo, 2017). Similar studies including Ferguson, Thornley & Gibb (2016), and Hoq (2020) also support that librarians go with their conscience and moral principles when discharging their duties, especially when they come by principles and laws that restrict the privacy right of library users. Consequently, it appears that the solution to the ethical dilemma on privacy as practiced these days is that librarians either offer digital content as they are or do not provide the service to users.

Equity in Access to Information

Access refers to the capability to acquire information that is available using both physical technology and the skills required to use the technology. Equity focuses on providing information to users all that is required (Mostak and Hoq 2020). Ethical matters on equity in access to information focus on an individual's right to have access to specific information. Equality and equity are often used interchangeably in librarianship since they both focus on delivering the equivalent services to users regardless of their demographic profile. This however may not be strict on users requiring specialized services, such as the physically challenged. Britz and Ackerman (2006) opined that the right of access is regarded as a valuable human right that allows individuals to exercise their fundamental human right to information. In Librarianship, the right of access to information is protected by the Librarians' code of conduct; just like in most democratic societies where access to information is judicially protected. Ethics of librarianship and information workers states that librarians offer the utmost service to all library users through well-organized suitable resources,

equitable service policies and access; and precise and unbiased responses to users' requests (ALA, 2018). The right of access can, however, be violated when people are denied access to information that is of value to them. Ferguson (2016) opined that librarians have less control over access to information in this technology age than they did with physical collections. The researcher noticed that as soon as a thing is published on the internet, it becomes generally accessible. Though advances in information technologies have increased the amount of information available for decision-making; this does not certify that each user would have uniform access to the resources (Eining and Lee, 1997). This is a result of unavailability, unaffordability, and the high cost of the skills and equipment required for the access. The onus, lies on librarians, to ensure the provision of information, equally, to all library clientele without biases (Smith, 2010) and that information users are given equal right to access needed information.

Information Accuracy

Accuracy is the truth in the information provided and it seeks to confirm the certainty of information (Ding, 2019). When information does not confirm or even attempt to confirm the truth it can be regarded as a piece of inaccurate information. Inaccurate information more often than not, poses problems for information users as they can be misled and exposed to risk in several ways. Seeing that people use information obtained to make practical decisions, it becomes essential for library and information professionals to ensure that accurate information is provided to users. Unfortunately, it can often be very difficult for people to identify inaccurate information (Ganhi, 2019). Inaccurate information often leads to serious financial, health, or academic harm (Kiley, 2002). To avoid these dangers, librarians are expected to ensure that they provide users with information that is accurate and reliable (Smith, 2010). Library and information professionals have responded to the problem (Fallis, 2007) by publishing guidelines for evaluating information, with empirical and non-empirical indicators of accuracy as identity of authors, independent corroboration, support, and presentation (Ndumbaro, 2018; Kim, 2019; Vamanu & Zak, 2022). This is important in providing necessary and useful information (Gao & Yu, 2020) especially during disease outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic been experienced in the world.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual Property raises a crucial ethical issue in delivering information services. It is regarded as any physical thing over which a person can exercise certain rights, such as allowing some people access to specific information or resources while keeping out others (Vaidhyanathan, 2017). Intellectual property allows free access for all expressions of ideas from which users from different backgrounds (Bouncken & Aslam, 2019; Ding, 2019; Kim et al, 2021). Information has some exceptional features that can create disastrous problems are concerns of intellectual property (Chaudhry & Zimmerman, 2012). Therefore, it is the responsibility of librarians to respect intellectual property rights and advocate a balance between the interests of information users and rights holders (ALA, 2018; Igbeka & Okoroma, 2013). The Librarians' code of ethics notes that, librarians and other information professionals must recognise the intellectual property right of authors and other creators and will seek to ensure that their rights are respected. Copyright and patent are some of many examples of intellectual property (Kinsella, 2013).

Copyright is referred to as an elaborate set of rights that is given to the originator of various forms of works (Cornish, 2019). The set of rights is commonly referred to as intellectual property rights. Copyright prevents original works from being reproduced,

performed, or disseminated without permission. However, advancement in technology and means of delivering information services is increasingly threatening the issue of 'ownership of information and protection of authors' interests as considered in copyright rules. This is mainly because technology enables information to be copied and disseminated faster and easier than ever before, without the acknowledgment of the original author. Hoq (2020) believe that some strict copyright laws are creating an information gap between users of information by altering the librarianship code that seeks to ensure that the right of the users to look for information is granted. Seeing that once information is produced, it has the elusive quality of being easy to reproduce and share with others. Moreover, this replication can take place without violation of copyright (Hoq, 2020) or by destroying the original information.

Rubin (2011), therefore postulates that copyright under the intellectual property is an ethical issue because at its heart is the question of whether individuals should copy the intellectual work of others without asking the originator's permission. Librarians feel an ethical tension to protect the rights of both authors and patrons; they want authors to profit, but not to permit authors and publishers to unnecessarily restrict and control the flow of information. Thus, based on the current issues in our society, library and information professional bodies can seek the consent of the government and those in authority to relax some stringent rules for the benefit of library patrons. For instance, in the United Kingdom, CILIP requested that the government relaxes copyright laws (Cairns, & Wright, 2020; IFLA, 2020).

Censorship

Advances in technology have given rise to so many ethical issues. One of these critical issues in libraries and information centers today is information censorship (Steele, 2018). Censorship refers to the official supervision and control of information, ideas, or artistic expression, circulated within a society, which could pose a threat to the political, social, or moral order. It may be imposed by local, state, or national government authority; a religious body, or occasionally by a powerful private group or speakers, writers, and individual artists (Hoq, 2020). Censorship also involves the removal of or keeping library materials from public access, or restricting the resources to a particular audience based on users' characteristics such as age; gender (ALA, 2016), and so on. This process allows for the examination of books, periodicals, plays, films, television and radio programs, news reports, and other information materials to alter or suppress parts that are thought to be intolerable.. Censorship is done in several ways, for instance, web filtering assesses the loyalty of information professionals to information access (Trushina, 2004; Stem, 2017). This is usually achieved through selection with the aid of content filtering software.

The issue of censorship is paramount in the provision of library and information services and it is often seen as a barrier or threat to information access (Ferguson 2016). Therefore, IFLA opposes censorship of any form, including the use of the web or content filtering software (Cooke, 2019). Though ethical codes have been seen as a facilitator of ethical decision-making processes especially in libraries, Hoq (2020) recently discovered that the issue of ethics of librarianship is continually confounded with the different argument on censorship. For instance, code 'Access to Information' posits that information workers including librarians reject the denial and restriction of access to ideas and information and ideas specifically through censorship (Pryor-Darnell, Andersen, & Rowling, 2019). Steele (2018) also posited that unless there is an understandable explanation on the function of governing bodies also known as gatekeepers, in the decision-making process, unintended censorship of ideas, as well as the information may continue. This and lots

more often challenge the process of information service delivery. However, it is common for librarians to practice self-censorship to protect library and information users from the unsafe effects of misinformation and disinformation (Hoq, 2020). Librarians hence need to understand the why, how, and when to apply this ethical code for effective service delivery.

Ethical Issues in Information Service Delivery

Information service delivery is a major activity in the library that involves individuals who have expectations of how to relate and behave towards the users, patrons, and other categories of library users. Seeing that librarians deliver several information services, it is more convenient for them to use more internet technologies to achieve effective service delivery. Particularly in the 'New Normal' normal era where the internet has helped many to do more new things including online classes, e-consultation, and e-library service delivery, also regarded as the digitalized service delivery (Nainwal, 2020). The application of ethics in library services delivery, provides a critical background for understanding legal and moral issues that relate to information service provision and delivery. However, the use of internet technologies requires that some ethical principles are complied with. Yet, the practice of observing information ethics when delivering information services in libraries, has posed several issues that are of great concern.

The number of studies has indicated increasing awareness of ethical issues in information service delivery (Zinaida, 2017; Kathleen, Olawale & Olaide, 2018). Despite that the level of awareness of ethical issues is on the increase, some librarians seem to carry out their duties as though there are no ethical codes. This indifference in the use of ethical codes when delivering information services has been adduced to a lack of adequate and continuous awareness and training on information ethics and issues (Igbeka & Okoroma, 2013 and Ndumbaro & Mutula, 2020). Similarly, most librarians that desire to carry out their responsibilities in an ethical way (Hoq, 2020), are often faced with many dilemmas relating to the processing, preservation, and dissemination of information. Information professionals are often in an ethical dilemma, with particular reference to those related to information privacy and confidentiality (Rotenberg, 2015; Ferguson, 2016). Since librarians are considered to be responsible for the ethical implications of their decisions (Graff et al., 2020); there must be adequate awareness of ethical concerns that come with delivering information services. This will assist them in making the right decisions.

Ethical issues have been examined from many perspectives ranging from the choice of material (selection), access to information, quality of information, equality of treatment, right, accuracy and censorship, copyright and data protection, intellectual freedom, reference services, protecting users' rights, information retrieval, and dissemination, computer application, use and misuse of information, charging fees and profit-making, conflict of interest and confidentiality to personal ethics (Hauptman, 2010; Igbeka & Okoroma, 2013). Kathleen, Olawale & Olaide (2018) in an interview with 5 professional librarians on awareness and perception of ethical issues in library service delivery in an academic library in Nigeria reported a high level of awareness of the ethical issues by the librarians. The study also identified copyright, privacy, and confidentiality issue as the most common ethical issues in information service delivery. Hoq (2020) in a recent study also acknowledged that the ethical concerns of library and information professionals originate from ethical issues that mostly arise in form of copyright violation, censorship, and plagiarism. These concerns when mishandled by information professionals have often lead to unethical behaviours in delivering library services.

Some unethical behaviours identified in the literature are: concealment of information, divulging private information, misinforming patrons, or dissemination of false information (Milton, 2008; Kaddu, 2010). Most of these unprincipled behaviours often stems from restriction of access or censorship. These restrictions involve the use of filtering software; issues with information accuracy and selection decision; copyright infringement; conflicting interest between key information stakeholders; protection of intellectual property; equitable access to library materials; and complexity of ethical codes (Rotenberg, 2015; Ferguson, 2016).

Methodology

A survey design was employed for the study. Surveys are useful for descriptive and exploratory purposes; and are essential in obtaining information on characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences of the group(s) of people (Nardi, 2018). The study population consists of 81 librarians in the 15 private universities in Osun state. Total enumeration was employed to select respondents for the study. Data was collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire has two sections; section one is to obtain information on respondents' demographics. Section two is made up of two -sub-sections that cover the study's objectives and research questions. Level of awareness of ethics of information was measured with seven items on a four-point scale, 1-Not Aware, 2- Aware, 3-Somewhat Aware, and 4-Highly Aware; while awareness of ethical issues was measured with two points Likert scale, 1 (Yes) to 2 (No). The reliability of the questionnaire was established with Cronbach's Alpha value being between 0.8 and 0.9 for librarian's awareness of ethics of information and awareness of ethical issues in librarianship respectively. In line with Byrne (2010), the Cronbach values were found to be above the benchmark value of 0.82 for the reliability test. Therefore, the instrument was considered reliable and valid. A total of 56 copies were duly completed and returned; giving a response rate of 70%. Data were analyzed using frequency distribution and descriptive statistics. Descriptive methods of analyses such as observation of frequencies, percentages, and cumulative means, was employed to answer the research questions. Results were presented using tables and bar charts.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Respondent's gender, age group, and academic qualification were analysed and presented in Table 1. According to the results regarding the gender of respondents, of the 56 respondents in the study, 40(71.4%) were male while females were 16(28.6%). The results show that were more male librarians participated in the study. Also, 22(39.3%) respondents were between the age group of 41 and 50 years, 16(28.6%) respondents each were between the age group of 31 and 40 years and below 30 years respectively.

Table 1: Gender Frequency Distribution of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40	71.4
	Female	16	28.6
Age Group	Below 30 years	16	28.6
	31 - 40 years	16	28.6
	41 - 50 years	22	39.3
	51 - 70 years	2	3.6
Academic Qualification	MSc	28	50
	PHD	7	12.5
	Others	218	37.5
	Total	56	100

N (Total number of respondents) = 56 (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

Only a very few respondents, that is, 2(3.6%) were between 50 and 70 years. We can thus infer from the results that respondents between 41 and 50 years participated more in this study. The result also shows that while 50% of the respondents were MSc holders, 37.5% had qualifications below MSc, only 12.5% had bagged their PhDs. Thus, it can be stated that most respondents are Master's degree holders. The results suggest that Academic libraries in Osun state consist mostly of Middle-aged, male librarians with good educational qualifications and at least are Master's degree holders. This also suggests the high intellectual level of respondents.

Research Question 1: What is the level of librarians' awareness of ethics of Information for service delivery in private Universities in Osun state?

Results in Table 2 reveal the level of awareness of respondents on the ethics of information service delivery.

Table 2: Level of Awareness of Ethics of Information Service Delivery among Librarians

Statements on Ethics of Information	Level of Awareness				N	Mean	Decision
	Highly Aware	Somewhat Aware	Aware	Not Aware			
Privacy	36	14	5	1	56	3.52	Highly Aware
Equity of access to information	26	12	12	6	56	3.04	Somewhat Aware
Confidentiality	36	14	5	1	56	3.52	Highly Aware
Restriction of access to information	29	20	1	6	56	3.29	Somewhat Aware
Intellectual property	36	13	7	0	56	3.52	Highly Aware
Information accuracy	30	17	4	5	56	3.59	Highly Aware
Copyright	27	8	15	6	56	3.00	Somewhat Aware
Grand Mean of level of awareness						3.35	Aware

According to the results in Table 2, more respondents (about 54%) are highly aware of Privacy, confidentiality, Intellectual Property, and Information Accuracy as ethics of the library profession that must be observed during service delivery. The mean result also shows the grand mean of the level of awareness as (Grand $\bar{x}$) 3.35. The result implies that the respondents are generally somewhat aware of the ethics of information service delivery as about 64.3% of respondents agreed to this. Likewise, the individual mean scores of each of the ethical codes signify that respondents are considerably aware of these ethics of information service delivery. Interestingly, the results also revealed that unlike other listed ethical codes of librarianship, all the respondents were more aware of intellectual property, privacy, and confidentiality as the right of information users. The findings of this study indicate that the level of awareness of ethics of information in service delivery among librarians is generally increasing. The finding of the study refutes some studies including Jones (2014) who found that librarians and information professionals exhibited a low or complete lack of knowledge of ethics. Similarly, Igbeka and Okoroma (2013) also reported inadequate awareness of ethical codes for librarians. However, the current study finding is in tandem with Kathleen et al. (2018) on high-level awareness of the level of information ethics. These findings suggest that librarians are becoming increasingly aware of how important these ethical codes are for effective service delivery.

Research Question 2: What are the ethical issues in Information service delivery experienced by librarians in private Universities in Osun state?

Results on ethical issues encountered by librarians in information service delivery are presented in Figure 1

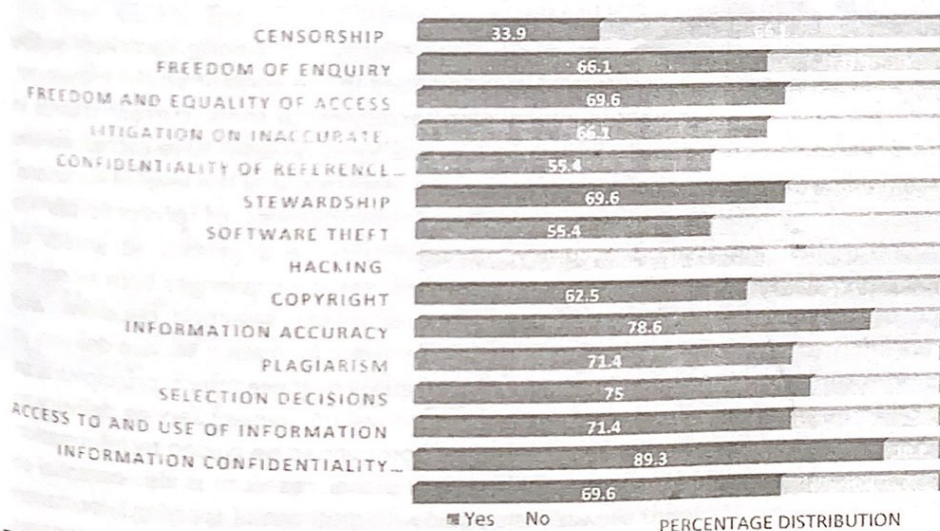


Figure 1: Frequency Distribution of Ethical Issues Encountered by Librarians in Information Service Delivery

Results in Figure 1 show that the majority of the respondents 50 (89.3%) identified 'Equity in access to and use of information as an ethical concern in information service delivery. A good number of respondents 44 (78.6%) also mention copyright, plagiarism 42 (75.0%), selection decisions 40 (71.4%) and providing accurate information 40 (71.4%). 69.6% each indicated information confidentiality and privacy issues and confidentiality of reference queries. Furthermore, the result shows that freedom and equality of access, censorship, software theft, hacking, stewardship, and litigation on inaccurate and untimely information provision with positive responses from 37 (66.1%), 36 (64.3%), 35 (62.5%), 31 (55.4%) and 31 (55.4%) respondents respectively are other ethical issues faced by librarians in information service delivery. Most of the respondents (above 70%), considered copyright, plagiarism, selection decisions, and providing accurate information as the most challenging ethical issues that confront librarians when delivering information services. However, only a few (about 40%) indicated that they had issues with censorship. The finding on censorship suggests a good understanding of this code of conduct. However, it could also mean that censorship is not being properly conducted.

The finding of the study indicates that equity in access to and use of information is a major ethical concern to librarians when delivering information service. To help overcome the challenges that come with the ethics of the profession, librarians are expected to have good knowledge of the principles that guide the profession. Mbofung and Popoola (2014) also suggested that good knowledge of ethical issues in information service delivery can be best acquired through education. This education on ethics can be in form of training for librarians-in-training as well as continued training for professionals like the librarians. Fallis (2007) also opines that courses and training on information ethics must be included in the learning curriculum of information professionals. This will help instill required knowledge on ethics during the early stage of the profession.

Conclusion

There is a growing awareness of the concept of ethics of information among librarians in the southwest region of Nigeria, especially in Osun State as evinced in the current study. However, the evolution of information, advancement in information technological tools, current trends in the world on life-threatening occurrences such as the Corona Virus disease, have increased the risk of librarians upholding the professional code of ethics. An assessment of the level of librarians' awareness of ethics of information indicates increasing consciousness of professionals on intellectual property rights, information accuracy, confidentiality, and privacy as ethics of information to be ensured when delivering services. However, several challenges such as equity in access to and use of information, issues of copyright, plagiarism, selection decisions, and providing accurate information were identified to impede effective information service delivery in the academic libraries surveyed. Librarians' high level of awareness of these ethical principles is an indicator that, if other necessary factors are put in place, there will be efficient service delivery to library patrons. Thus, increasing awareness on the need for librarians to be guided by information ethics, through training and local policies is recommended. Further research is also essential to identify measures to ensure that librarians are well equipped with methods of applying information ethics, and factors that deter librarians from adopting the codes of ethics when delivery services in Nigeria libraries. Regulatory bodies of Information professionals such as LRCN, with the collaborating associations including NLA and NGOs, can conduct periodic training and short-term courses on information ethics skill acquisition.

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