

Perceptions and Attitudes Affecting Choice of Law Librarianship as a Career: A study of Law Students in three Universities in South-East Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The choice of career in any field involves decision-making about the profession. It is one of the most important decisions in the life of the individual. It is against this background that the study on perceptions and attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students was undertaken, as Onoyeyan and Ajayi (2015) affirm that law students view law librarianship with apathy and do not like to pick law librarianship as a career choice.

Purpose of the Study: To determine the perceptions and attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in universities in South-East Nigeria.

Scope and Limitations of the Study: The study was limited to three universities in South-East Nigeria, namely, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University and Madonna University.

Methodology: The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey. The study involved final year law students of 2019/2020 academic session, totaling 410. Enumerating sampling method was employed. Self-structured questionnaire was distributed to the students and the return rate was 400. Data was analyzed using frequency and percentages.

Result: The study showed that the students were unaware of the fact that law librarianship is a career. Their attitudes to law librarianship were that of disinterestedness about the profession.

Conclusion: The study concluded by calling librarians to take it upon themselves to portray law librarianship profession in a widely acceptable way like other professional disciplines.

Recommendations: Library associations in the country were advised to organize conferences and workshops for law students in various law faculties in the universities to educate the students about law librarianship, among other recommendations.

Keywords: Perception, attitude, law librarianship, career choice, law students, law librarian.

INTRODUCTION

The choice of career in any field involves decision-making about the profession. It is one of the most important decisions in the life of an individual. Career choice, according to Doud (2003) is the act of choosing a profession or career in response to specific factors such as events, people, conditions, situation or any influence that affects the individual's choice. Isaa (2007) affirms that career choice has far-reaching implications on the individual's future in terms of lifestyle, status, income, security, and job satisfaction. Ofem and Ajayi (2008) argue that career choice remains a worrisome problem among Nigerian students across the country as many students are dependent

on chance and luck elements in career decision-making and are not aware of new career opportunities.

Making a career choice is a complex process due to the growing rate of change in the world of work which has increased the number of career transitions that individuals make during their lifetime (Isaa, 2007). In career decision-making, every person considers the factors of intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic elements (Jaw, Wang and Chang, 2006; Pang, 2014). Altruistic motivation for choosing a profession comes from a steadfastness and responsibility toward bettering society, which includes promoting social fairness and making a difference in the world (Dundar, 2014). Onoyeyan

and Unegbu (2019) state that altruistic considerations in career decision-making are prevalent in egalitarian professions, such as librarianship, that allow individuals to help the society. They include opportunities to work closely with people and to influence others, as well as the ability to contribute to society. According to Jungert, Ahm, and Thornberg (2014) various altruistic motives include the desire to help and support people, to answer a calling and to make a difference.

However, in spite of the fact that librarianship belongs to an egalitarian profession as remarked by Onoyeyan and Unegbu (2019), the profession of law librarianship has not won the admiration and attraction of other professions like medicine, law and accounting, so assert Onoyeyan and Ajayi (2015). Relatively speaking, Okoro (2009) declares that librarianship is the least sought-after profession in Nigeria, and Olayinka (2008) found in his study that students see librarianship as least profession among others. Law librarianship being an aspect of librarianship is no exception. All these apparently confirm what Onoyeyan and Ajayi (2015) affirm that law students view law librarianship with apathy and do not like to pick law librarianship as a career choice. It is against this background that the research is being undertaken. This work therefore investigates the perceptions and attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Bowman (2010), studies have shown that law students upon graduation pursue careers in other fields as corporate secretaryship, human resources, journalism, insurances, real property, investment banking, public policy/public administration, teaching etc. Continuing, he remarks that law students do not give a thought to law librarianship, which is a legal career, in spite of the fact that it is a lucrative and vibrant profession that has evolved from the progressions of law and librarianship. Observation, however, has shown that there is dearth of Nigerian professionals who possess qualifications in law and librarianship, to take up appointments as law librarians. As Nigerian law graduates or lawyers tend to pursue careers in other fields than in librarianship, the future of the profession of law librarianship seems to be bleak in the country. This study therefore investigates to determine the perceptions and attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in three universities in South-East Nigeria. The universities represent federal, state and privately owned.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions and attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in universities in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To determine the perceptions affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in universities in South-East Nigeria.
- To determine the attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in universities in South-East Nigeria

Research Questions

- What are the perceptions affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in universities in South-East Nigeria?
- What are the attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in universities in South-East Nigeria?

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study covered some universities in the geographical zone of South East Nigeria. It was limited to three universities that offer law programme of study. The universities are federal-owned, state-owned and privately owned respectively. They are Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Chukwue-meka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus and Madonna University, Ojika. The study involved final year law students in the aforementioned institutions. This is because the choice of career of this category of students would have matured since they are nearing graduation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Librarianship is one of the world's earliest professions ranking on the same pedestal as with priesthood, medicine, law and accountancy (Dada, 2011). Librarianship is seen as a career that is dedicated to serving the public, providing timely and accurate information, thus contributing to the development of the society. It is a service-oriented profession that plays a significant role within and outside the educational system of any country (Abata-Ebire, Ajayi and Adetayo, 2018). This notwithstanding, Igbinosa (2007) maintains that people, particularly students, do not like to pursue a career in librarianship. This is because they are ignorant of the fact that librarians are the brains behind the successful stories of students, lawyers, pilots, engineers, medical doctors, etc. He further argues that with the advancement of information

technology, librarians are no longer limited to the library alone but have improved their roles in different areas such as curator, programmer, consultant, webmaster, database manager, analyst, etc. On the other hand, Onoyeyan and Ajayi (2015) assert that law librarians are specialized library professionals, highly skilled to offer exceptional level of credibility and expertise because they possess competency as librarians and competency in the subject of law. Law librarianship, as Onoyeyan and Unegbu (2019) report, is a legal-related specialized profession that combines the practice of the legal profession and the library profession, providing specialized library services to legal clientele. A career in librarianship requires a cocktail of competencies, from information searching skills to communication and technical skills (Lahoo, 2013).

Career choice is influenced by multiple factors which include personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and financial (Edward and Quitter, 2011). With regard to globalization, Oluwatimilehin and Wale (2009), state that it has brought about emergence of lucrative professions as offshoots of the traditional professions such as medicine, law, nursing, engineering etc. On factors influencing career choice, Muraguri (2011) is of the view that individual's choice of career is likely to be influenced by several factors including personal and cultural values, family background, career expectations and career guidance.

Law librarianship is a special hybrid of the profession, which on its own part strives on information (Dada, 2011) Panella (1991) reports that in academic institutions, it is increasingly common to find the dual masters in library science and law degrees among law librarians. In this regard, Mersky and Leiter (1991) state that the competencies required of law librarian fall into two categories: competency as a librarian and competency in the subject of law. The education and training of law librarians requires minimally, entry-level candidates who must possess a master's degree in library and information science (Sherr and Webb, 1989) and a degree in law (Hambleton, 1991). This is why law librarians are academic staff in the universities. According to Onoyeyan and Unegbu (2019), academic law librarian is committed to serving the needs of law students, law faculty, the legal communities and the general public. But in spite of these services, they observe that law students upon graduation pursue careers in corporate secretary ship,

arbitration, human resources, journalism, but not in librarianship. They aver that creation of awareness of professional options contributes significantly to career choice intentions of students.

Awareness of librarianship as a vibrant career option involves having knowledge of the career of law librarianship, including knowledge of the specialized competencies, educational qualification and professionalism of law librarians. The specialized competencies of law librarianship include library management which involves providing leadership, maintaining an understanding of trends, developments, emerging technologies, reference, research, and client services, evaluating the quality, authenticity, and accuracy of information resources in a variety of formats; assisting and educating users in the use of the library's information systems, ... and needs assessment tools that effectively teaches library users and colleagues with differing needs and technological skill levels, providing training and guidance on the organization and use of legal resources in various formats (American Association of Law Libraries, 2010). A study by Ajidahun (1997) on students' perception of librarianship reveals a lack of awareness on the part of the students about whom a librarian is, his duties, required qualification and status. Also, a study done by Newbutt and Sen (2009) discovers that lack of awareness of librarianship as a professional career choice results in young people not wanting to become librarians. On the other hand, Rubin (2000) asserts that librarianship appears to have a relatively low status. On the other hand, Mosley (1999) found in his study that law librarianship is worth the sacrifice of having a degree in law.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey. The study was conducted among the final year law students for the 2019/2020 academic session in the three universities of study. Nnamdi Azikiwe University has population of 180 students, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University -107, and Madonna University -123. The total population of the students is 410. Enumerating sampling method was employed, as all students of the population were given the opportunity of participating in the study. A self-structured questionnaire was distributed to the students in the faculties of law of their respective institutions through their course representatives, who cooperated with the researcher. The questionnaire was rated on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D)

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and Strongly Disagree (SD). 400 questionnaire was completed and collected, representing 97.3% rate of

response. Data was analyzed using frequency and percentages.

Demographic Distribution of Respondents

| Variables | Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| Age | 15-20 | 122 | 30.5 |
| | 21-30 | 195 | 48.75 |
| | 30-40 | 60 | 15 |
| | 40 and above | 23 | 5.75 |
| Gender | Male | 217 | 54.25 |
| | Female | 183 | 45.75 |
| Marital status | Single | 366 | 91.5 |
| | Married | 34 | 8.5 |

The table above shows that majority of the students admitted into law are single and between the ages of 21-30

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The presentation of results is guided by the two research questions raised

Research Question1:

What are the perceptions affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in South-East Nigeria?

Data to answer the above research question were shown in Table 1 below:

Table1. Perceptions affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in South-East Nigeria

| S/N | Perception | SA | % | A | % | D | % | SD | % |
|-----|--|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| 1 | Law librarianship is frustrating because of control by two masters- university librarian and dean of law | 252 | 63 | 96 | 24 | 43 | 10.75 | 9 | 2.25 |
| 2 | I am aware that law librarianship is a career | 14 | 3.5 | 21 | 5.25 | 105 | 26.25 | 260 | 65 |
| 3 | Being a law librarian does not give room for law practice unlike law lecturer | 114 | 28.5 | 201 | 50.25 | 55 | 13.75 | 30 | 7.5 |
| 4 | The financial benefit of being a law librarian is poor unlike law practice | 120 | 30 | 144 | 36 | 86 | 21.5 | 50 | 12.5 |
| 5 | Legal practice will give me opportunity of coming into contact with various people in the society | 83 | 20.75 | 222 | 55.5 | 67 | 16.75 | 28 | 7 |
| 6 | Law librarians are not offered political appointments unlike law lecturers and private practitioners | 105 | 26.25 | 136 | 34 | 90 | 22.5 | 69 | 17.25 |
| 7 | Law librarian has poor image | 172 | 43 | 119 | 29.75 | 77 | 19.25 | 32 | 8 |
| 8 | Law librarianship is not a dignified profession | 116 | 29 | 125 | 31.25 | 84 | 21 | 75 | 18.75 |
| 9 | Law librarianship has low status | 240 | 60 | 128 | 32 | 25 | 6.25 | 7 | 1.75 |
| 10 | Law librarian is a non-teaching staff whose duties are limited to law library | 80 | 20 | 164 | 41 | 96 | 24 | 60 | 15 |

Table 1 revealed the perceptive factors affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students. Majority of the respondents indicated that the choice of law librarianship was strongly affected by the frustration of law librarian due to control by university librarian and dean of law, 252(63%); unawareness that law librarianship is a career, 260(65%); as well as low status of law librarianship, 240(60%). Furthermore, majority of the students indicated that the choice of law librarianship were affected by the profession not giving room for law practice, 201(50.25%); and also not providing opportunity of coming into contact with various people in the society, 222(55.5%). The study also showed that choice of law librarianship was affected by law librarian's

poor financial benefit, 144(36%); not being offered political appointment, 136(34%); poor image, 172(43%); not being a dignified profession, 125(31.25%); and being a non-teaching staff whose duties are limited to law library, 164 (41%) . The implication of this study shows that the law students are unaware of the fact that law librarianship is a career and therefore have negative perception about law librarianship.

Research Question2:

What are the attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in South-East Nigeria?

Data to answer the above research question were shown in Table 2 below:

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Table 2. Attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in South-East Nigeria

| S/no | Perception | SA | % | A | % | D | % | SD | % |
|------|---|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| 11 | I cannot sacrifice my time after getting a first degree in law to study masters in librarianship to become a law librarian instead of masters degree in law | 271 | 67.75 | 100 | 25 | 23 | 5.75 | 6 | 1.5 |
| 12 | I do feel that there is no prospect of advancement in law librarianship as a profession | 126 | 31.25 | 152 | 38 | 95 | 23.75 | 27 | 6.75 |
| 13 | I do think that law librarianship does not contribute to societal development | 53 | 13.25 | 88 | 22 | 187 | 46.75 | 72 | 18 |
| 14 | I do feel that law librarianship is not a challenging profession | 150 | 37.5 | 126 | 31.5 | 75 | 18.75 | 49 | 12.25 |
| 15 | I do not like rendering free services to others as a law librarian does | | - | 81 | 20.25 | 204 | 51 | 115 | 28.75 |
| 16 | I am not interested in becoming law librarian | 265 | 66.25 | 114 | 28.5 | 21 | 5.25 | - | - |
| 17 | I shall prefer being a law officer in the Judiciary/Ministry of Justice to being a law librarian | 144 | 36 | 200 | 50 | 41 | 10.25 | 15 | 3.75 |
| 18 | I can only consider law librarianship as a career if other options of employment fail | 107 | 26.75 | 190 | 47.5 | 61 | 15.25 | 42 | 10.5 |
| 19 | I feel sympathy for law librarian as he/she is a lawyer but does not practice law | 50 | 12.5 | 128 | 32 | 171 | 42.75 | 51 | 12.75 |
| 20 | I regard law librarian as other librarians in the university library even though he/she is a lawyer | 113 | 28.25 | 120 | 30 | 102 | 25.5 | 65 | 16.25 |

In Table 2 above, the respondents indicated their attitudes that affect law librarianship as a choice of career. The study revealed that out of the ten components of attitude listed, respondents affirmed that: I cannot sacrifice my time after getting a first degree in law to study masters in librarianship to become a law librarian instead of masters degree in law, 371(92.75%); I do feel that there is no prospect of advancement in law librarianship as a profession, 278(69.5%); I do feel that law librarianship is not a challenging profession, 276(69%); I am not interested in becoming a law librarian, 379 (94.75%); I shall prefer being a law officer in the Judiciary/ Ministry of Justice to being a law librarian, 344 (86%); and I do regard law librarian as other librarians in the university library even though he/she is a lawyer, 233(58.25%) are ranked highest. The implication of this study shows that law librarianship is underestimated as a profession by law students and that the students are in tune with law practice.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined perceptions and attitudes affecting choice of law librarianship as a career among law students in three universities in South-East Nigeria.

The findings of the study show that the respondents perceive law librarianship as frustrating, and have the feeling that it is not worth the sacrifice of getting a first degree in law. This is in consonance with the findings of Onoyeyan and Ajayi (2015) that law students view law librarianship with apathy and do not like to pick law librarianship as a

career choice. The finding of this study also disagrees with that of Mosley (1999) that law librarianship is worth the sacrifice of having a degree in law.

The study reveals that a whopping majority of the respondents are not aware that law librarianship is a career. This contrasts with the findings of Onoyeyan and Unegbu (2019) that there is a slight awareness of law librarianship as career among law students. However, this study agrees with the findings of Ajidahun (1997) on students' perception of librarianship, which shows a lack of awareness on the part of the students about whom a librarian is, and his duties, among others. The findings of this study also agrees with that of Newbutt and Sen (2009) that lack of awareness of librarianship as a career results in young people not wanting to become librarians.

The study reveals an overwhelming response of disinterestedness in becoming law librarian, thereby agreeing with Okoro (2009) who found in her study that librarianship is the least sought-after profession. Also, Olayinka (2008) found in his study that students seek librarianship as last resort which is in consonance with the findings of this study in which majority of the respondents indicate that they can only consider law librarianship as a career if other options of employment fail.

CONCLUSION

Career in law librarianship has been a subject of concern in the librarianship world. This is because of its requirements of having at least a degree in law and a masters degree in librarianship, which

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make it a bit difficult as most law graduates and lawyers feel reluctant in delving into law librarianship as career. This calls for the fact that librarians have to portray the law librarianship profession in a widely acceptable way like other professional disciplines and make the profession attractive to law students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be a continuous awareness of law librarianship profession in order to clarify the disbelief of law students that law librarianship is not a career, and lucrative profession. This should be done by the various library associations such as Nigerian Library Association, Nigerian Association of Law Libraries, among others, through organization of conferences and workshops for law students in various law faculties.
- Law librarianship as a course should be introduced in the undergraduate curriculum of the Faculties of Law in Nigerian universities, to enable law students to be acquainted with law librarianship as one of the legal professions. The course should be taught by law librarians. It should be carried out in a manner that will arouse the interest of the students and this can be achieved through the application of technologies so that the students will be fit into the electronic environment.
- Universities should make the remunerations of law librarians very attractive by including various allowances in their salaries to make them higher than their counterparts in the same salary scales, so as to attract law students in making law librarianship a choice of career.
- Nigerian Law School, which trains law graduates to become lawyers, should be involved in creation of awareness of law librarianship as a legal profession. This could be done by introducing law career symposium in one of the activities in the various law schools in the country, to educate the students on many career options available to lawyers. This is because law graduates in Nigerian law schools are fashioned after law practice as ultimate.

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