

# Shift Duty and its Effects on Academic Librarians in Federal University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

Eruvwe, Ufuoma<sup>1</sup>, Sambo, Atanda Saliu<sup>2</sup> & Enite Anita Urhefe<sup>3</sup>

Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Library, Delta State<sup>1,2,3</sup>

[eromoserecon@yahoo.com](mailto:eromoserecon@yahoo.com)<sup>1</sup>, [asiwajufupre@gmail.com](mailto:asiwajufupre@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>, [anitaurhefe@yahoo.com](mailto:anitaurhefe@yahoo.com)<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The study aimed to survey shift duty and its effects on academic librarians in Federal University Libraries in South – South, Nigeria.

**Design methodology/approach**–The study adopted both descriptive and exploratory research designs. Questionnaire and observation checklist were the major instruments for data collection. A total of one hundred and eight (108) librarians from the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria were drawn. The responses was based on four (4)-point rating scale, a mid-point mean of 2.5 was used as positive response criterion mean and accepted as a positive response.

**Findings**–The study revealed that research purpose, academic advancement, better performance and study independently were the major reasons while academic librarians embark on shift duty. Findings also, indicated that the challenges associated with shift duty on academic librarians in federal university libraries in South – South, Nigeria. It showed that circadian rhythms and total blackout topped the highest impediment.

**Practical implications** - The important finding in this study is that academic libraries are the most relevant institution library to support the school curriculum, to support the research of the university faculty and students. Therefore, underdevelopment of academic libraries and inadequate infrastructure facilities, lack of medical arrangement, insufficient fund and poor lighting of the library environment will hinder academic librarians to discharge effective and efficiency operation on shift duty in academic libraries.

**Originality value** – This is the first study of its kind to explore and describe shift duty and its effect on academic librarian in federal university libraries in south – south, Nigeria.

**Keywords** Shift duty, Effects, Academic librarians, University Libraries.

**Paper type**- Empirical Study

## Introduction

Academic library has a prominent role to play in supporting higher education to fulfill objectives of its parent institution. Students in higher education are to be provided with the facilities necessary for mastering the subject matter, techniques, skills, habits of thought, and methods of work in their chosen field. Classroom instructions alone will not provide all the opportunities needed for attaining all these complex educational objectives. It is here that libraries come to help students. The university library is a collection of sources, services and the building in which it is housed. It provides access to various resources in order to support teaching, learning and research activities (Vishala & Bhandi, 2009).

In another development, Akporhonor (2005), define academic libraries as those libraries established in tertiary institution for the purpose of research, learning and reading. They are

libraries attached to tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnic, colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, colleges of technology and also research institutes. For the services in an academic library to be possible and effective, the librarians need to be on ground. Librarians are considered as the most valuable asset of academic libraries. Slop (2007), opines that librarians play vital and varied roles in the life of the university, guiding students and faculty at the reference desk, instructing library research sessions, and developing library collections. It is a truism to say that librarians in all sectors of an academic library wear many different hats and provide numerous services to patrons. A librarian is a professional trained in information science. They are responsible for a vast amount of information, from the classic management of books and periodicals to more modern responsibilities involving audio and video recordings, as well as digital resources. They also enjoy the academic

status of other lecturers in a university as well as salaries and entitlements. Cheong (2008), defined a librarian as a full-time employee with library degree, who is responsible for decision-making regarding application of ICT in libraries, and who runs the affairs of a library as in-charge, solo librarian, head librarian, chief librarian, library manager, library director or a senior librarian.

For the library to render effective and efficient services to its users, the introduction of shift duty is paramount. The phenomenon of the shift work culture is quite significant in academic library services, and to eliminate it entirely is too idealistic. In attempting to provide an effective service to users, libraries have to extend their closing time into the evenings. Continuing complaints from librarians working shifts in academic libraries may affect the level of service provided if the complaints are not addressed. Slon (1997), a pioneer writer on night work, refers to night-shift workers as people who live on the other side of the clock. Daytime is their sleep time, while the night time is their toil time. These are the people of the night who slog at all hours to keep a twenty-four hour economy breathing and active. The term according to Knauth, (1987), shift duty refers to those working-time systems in which work is done at different times over the day or at the same, but unusual time. As expected, shift duty in the library, even if they are at night, has the least amount of interference to one's circadian rhythm, as long as librarians maintain the same sleep/awake patterns during their days off (Elliot and Kuehl, 2007). This is because it takes 21 consecutive days for the circadian rhythm to fully adjust to night shifts. However, if an employee is constantly alternating between day and night shifts, one's circadian rhythm cannot adjust, which can lead to chronic sleep deprivation and fatigue. In order to counteract the effects that shift work can have on the circadian rhythm, several researchers have suggested taking short naps (approximately 20 minutes) as they can help restore mental abilities, while two-hour naps can be extremely restorative and can assist in minimizing the problems associated with interfering with the circadian rhythm. However, as will be discussed below, it is not always possible to guarantee that those librarians working extended work hours will find an opportunity to get longer periods of uninterrupted sleep while on shift, especially in

jurisdictions with higher call volumes (Elliot and Kuehl, 2007).

Again, higher rates of sick leave are noted amongst rotational shift workers (Panton & Eitzen 1997), Cardiovascular status and hemodynamic functions influence renal perfusion and urine production, digestive tract function, reproductive hormone release and red and white blood cell production, Immune response, too, is diminished in proportion to the amount of sleep debt accumulated (Perkins 2001). For shift duty to work out well in academic libraries, Akin (2009), opined that the following measures should be adhering to: Provide similar facilities as those available during the daytime such as a canteen and allow shift workers time for training and development; Ensure temperature & lighting is appropriate and preferably adjustable; Provide training and information on the risks of shift work and ensure supervisors and management can recognize problems; Consider increasing supervision during periods of low alertness; Control overtime, shift swapping and on-call duties and discourage workers from taking second jobs; Set standards and allow time for communication at shift handovers; Encourage interaction between workers and provide a means of contact for lone workers; Encourage workers to tell their GP that they are shift workers; Provide free health assessments for night workers, Ensure that adequate security is in place and Ensure the workplace and surroundings are well lit, safe and secure. Perkins (2001) also suggested the following measure to a successful shift duty. They include shift and night workers in all company training initiatives; Introduce family-friendly policies that include the difficulties faced by shift and night workers; Educate managers, shift workers and night workers about the need for proper sleep and the dangers of fatigue; Ensure all night and shift workers are considered in all appropriate risk assessments and workstation assessments; Adjust exposure levels to noise, chemicals, physical hazards, etc. as necessary, as workplace exposure levels are based on 8-hour reference periods, and not extended shifts; Consider employee safety going to and coming from work due to fatigue, and particularly at unsociable hours; advise on the use of carpools, public transport, rested drivers and taxis Ensure car parks and external entrances are well lit at night time; Provide good meals facilities for night/shift workers; Ensure proper ventilation of workplace; Install bright lights

where practicable in work areas (to signal to the body to be alert and awake) and to offer alternatives to night and shift workers who have difficulty adjusting to such work.

Sew (2003), opined that shift duty in academic libraries has really assisted so many students to do well academically. She went further to say that it enables library users to study independently, broaden their horizon and to have excellent grades in their academic pursuit. So therefore, the introduction of shift duty in academic libraries is paramount to library users.

In a 2008 National Sleep Foundation poll, only 63% of shift workers (versus 89% of non-shift workers) said their work schedule allows them to get enough sleep. They were significantly more likely to sleep fewer than 6 hours on workdays, to work more hours per week on average, and to experience drowsy driving at least once a month in the previous year and result to serious health issues. Wers (2007) is of the view that shift duty has really affected her health. That she feels sick always because of the sleepless night she observed during shift duty, and that there is no good medical arrangement to fall back to each time she is sick.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to assess the challenges of shift duty on academic librarians in Federal University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The specific objective is to:

- Find out the purpose of organizing shift duty in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
- Identify challenges associated with shift duty on academic librarians in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
- Suggest strategies to improve on shift duty in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

An academic library serves an institution of higher learning for the purpose of learning, reading and advance research. These libraries serve two complementary purposes: to support the school's curriculum, and to support the research of the university faculty and students. Academic libraries are the treasure house of knowledge to cater for the needs of scholars, scientists, technocrats, researchers, students and others who are in the mainstream of higher

education. Academia stimulates the creation and transmission of knowledge, and academic libraries have played a significant role in supporting such activities (Kim & Abbas, 2010). Thus, academic libraries are knowledge creating and knowledge-based organizations. Young and Belanger (1983), defined an academic library as a library, or system of libraries, established, supported and administered by a university to meet the information needs of its students, faculty and support its instructional research and service programs. These services are needed to enable an individual to develop full potentials and extend the horizons of perception, interests, and skills. According to Krolak (2005), Libraries assist in finding, using and interpreting appropriate information that opens up opportunities for lifelong learning, literacy enhancement, informed citizenship, recreation, creative imagination, individual research, critical thinking, and ultimately empowerment in an increasingly complex world.

For this service to be effective, shift duty of librarians is of importance in other to cater for library users. Academic libraries have to extend their working hours so that their services could be rendered more effectively. The term shift work means different things to different people. Shift work is popularly regarded as work in which employees "shift" schedules on some regular basis from daytime to evening or nighttime. Many researchers define shift work as employment in which two or more groups of employees work at different times of a 17-hour or 24-hour time span, including a so-called day shift. Most discussions consider shift work to be any employment that regularly occurs between 8am-4pm or 4pm-10am or overnight in academic libraries.

Furthermore, shift duty is a method of organization of working time in which workers succeed one another at the workplace so that the establishment can operate longer than the hours of work of individual workers at different daily and night hours. Following the approach taken by Williams (2008), one can identify the following categories of shift work among librarians: regular evening schedules (beginning after 3 p.m., ending before midnight), regular night (beginning after 11 p.m., ending before 11 a.m.), rotating (day to evening and/or night), split (two or more distinct work periods each day), on call (no pre-arranged schedule), and irregular shifts duty.

Haus and Smolensky (2006), reviewed several possible effects of a disruption in circadian rhythms on shift workers. It can result in insomnia or non-restorative sleep during the period of adjustment to a new schedule. It can also lead to changes in hormone levels, which can influence cell growth and division. Moreover, workers rarely become completely habituated to unusual shifts. Even after a long time on night shifts, only a minority of workers show adaptation of their circadian system to the nocturnal activity pattern, in part because night workers usually revert to the usual sleep/wake cycle on days off.

Shift duty can also have adverse health effects through its potential impact on behaviour, such as poorer quality diet, or increased smoking or alcohol consumption. Boggild and Knuts-son (1999), reported that shift workers are more likely than regular day workers to be smokers. Shift work may disrupt social and family relationships, by putting the worker's daily pattern of work and rest out of phase with that of family, friends and the social life of the community. This social disruption can also contribute to stress and thereby to adverse health outcomes.

In another development, Bonzini, Coggon, and Palmer (2007), conducted a systematic review of the literature on the association between several possible pregnancy complications (premature delivery; low birth weight; and pre-eclampsia) and various working conditions, including shift work or night works, which were grouped together. (Pre-eclampsia is characterized by high blood pressure and excessive weight gain, among other symptoms.)

In a review of various health disorders and shift work, Knuts- (2003), concluded the strongest evidence supported an association between shift work and gastrointestinal disease, coronary heart disease and pregnancy complications (miscarriage, low birth weight and preterm birth). He cited several studies reporting more gastrointestinal disorders among shift workers than day workers. For example, a Japanese study Segawa et al., (1987) of 11,675 employees in factories, banks and schools found that gastric ulcers were more than twice as common among shift workers as day workers. This is supported by Perkins (2001), who concludes that people who sleep during the day obtain about 4 hours

less sleep than night sleepers. Thus, temperature cycles in the body also affect the sleep-wake cycle. The circadian-driven propensity for sleep is therefore strongest at night. Night workers must work during the nocturnal release of melatonin and sleep during the day without it, and also against the cortisol-induced desire for morning wakefulness (Perkins 2001, Lamond et al.2003). Fletcher and Dawson (1997), state that 'sleep that occurs during times when an individual is biologically driven to be awake tends to be shorter and of decreased quality. Many sleep studies have shown that night sleep is the most restful and restorative.

Also, about 1 in 6 employee's works other than regular days schedules, but data are scarce on how workers are affected; incomes may rise, but family routine, social life, and health often suffer. In support of these challenges of shift duty worker, Qwewe (2008), asserted that a proper medical arrangement should be in place to check-make workers who has developed health challenges during shift work. Again Fred (2000), also supported that spouse to workers who does shift duty in libraries should understood the nature of the work. He went further to advised that employee who cannot withstand the pressure of the job due to shift duty should resigned as the case may be, in other to pave way for other librarians who are willing to do the work more better and to move the library forward in other to achieve its aims and objectives.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey using questionnaire to collect data. A total of one hundred and eight (108) librarians from the federal university libraries in south-south Nigeria as shown in table 1 was the population of the study. A total of 108 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 91 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. The data was analyzed using percentages, frequency table, while mean score was used to answer the research question. For the responses, it was based on four (4)-point rating scale, a mid-point mean of 2.5 was used as positive response criterion mean and accepted as a positive response because the average of individual mean score was 2.5. For clarity, each item was presented in a table and all findings were presented as the table revealed.

**Table 1: Population of the Study**

S/N	Name of the Library	Librarians
1	University of Benin Library (UNIBEN)	18
2	University of Calabar Library (UNICAR)	18
3	Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun Library (FUPRE)	9
4	University of Portharcourt Library (UNIPORT)	23
5	University of Uyo Library (UNI-UYO)	28
6	Federal University of Otuoke Library	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>108</b>

*Source:* This information was gotten from the establishment units of the university under study through personal contact in 2016/2017 academic session.

As shown in table 1 above, the populations of this study consist of 108 recruited librarians in the federal university libraries under study. The breakdown of the number of librarian's in the federal university libraries in south-south Nigeria is as follows: University of Benin library (18); University of Calabar library (18); Federal

University of Petroleum Resources Effurun Library (9), University of Portharcourt Library (23); University of Uyo (28); and Federal University Otuoke Library (12) respectively.

**Research Objective 1:** To find out the purpose of organizing shift duty in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

**Table 2**

S/N	Purpose of shift duty in Academic Libraries	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Academic Advancement	51	20	11	9	3.2	Accepted
2	Broaden Users Horizon	44	21	17	9	3.0	Accepted
3	Better Performance	45	26	16	4	3.2	Accepted
4	Excellent Grades	34	34	13	0	2.9	Accepted
5	Scholarly publication	14	23	34	20	2.3	Rejected
6	Study Independently	44	27	12	8	3.1	Accepted
7	Research Purpose	55	21	11	4	3.3	Accepted
8	Assignments	37	29	21	4	3.0	Accepted

*Criterion Mean=2.50*

The table 2 shows that the following factors were responsible for shift duty in federal university libraries in South -South, Nigeria, except scholarly publication which was rated below the criterion mean of 2.50 (2.3). Academic advancement was rated (3.2). Broaden users horizon was rated (3.0), better performance (3.2), excellent grades (2.9), study independently (3.1), research purpose (3.3) and for assignment which is (3.0) respectively and generally

accepted because they were above the criterion mean. This assertion is supported by Ayo (2007) when she opined that shift duty encourages users and researchers to go extra mile to study independently, and for better academic performance.

**Research Objective 2:** To identify challenges associated with shift duty on academic librarians in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

**Table 3**

S/N	Challenges associated with shift duty on academic librarians	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Circadian rhythms	50	30	10	1	3.4	Accepted
2	Insomnia or non-restorative sleep	33	34	12	12	2.9	Accepted
3	Result to poor quality of diet	44	21	14	12	3.0	Accepted
4	Disrupt social and family relationship	39	32	15	5	3.1	Accepted
5	Higher rate of sick leave	37	33	20	1	3.1	Accepted
6	Total Blackout	44	34	12	12	3.4	Accepted
7	Stressful	39	32	15	5	3.1	Accepted
8	Depression	37	33	20	1	3.1	Accepted

*Criterion Mean=2.50*

The table 3 revealed challenges associated with shift duty on academic libraries. It shows that the following factors were making it difficult for

librarians to run shift duty in their respective libraries. Circadian rhythm which is rated (3.4) has to do with sleep disorder is a serious problem affected librarians on shift duty. Dikj

and Schantz (2005) is of the view that when the body does not rest and sleep at the appropriate time, it simply affect the body system and could result to weakness and feverish condition. Insomnia non restorative sleep is also rated (2.9) is another challenges affecting shift duty of librarians. Shinji (2003) sees insomnia non restorative sleep as the subjective feeling that sleep has been insufficiently refreshing, often despite the appearance of physiologically normal sleep which will drastically hindered librarians on shift duty. Other challenges are poor quality diet which is rated at (3.00), disrupt social and family relationship is (3.1), these findings

corresponded with that of Westfall-Lake and McBride (2000), who indicated that friends and community groups related to the night/shift worker had difficulty in following the constant revolving shift cycles of shift workers, resulting in shift workers eventually losing out on social events. Higher rate of sick leave is rated at (3.1), total blackout is (3.4), stressful (3.1) and depression is rated (3.1) respectively.

Research Objective 3: To suggest strategies to improve on shift duty in academic libraries in south-south, Nigeria.

**Table 4**

S/N	Strategies to improve on shift duty in academic libraries in South-South, Nigeria	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Proper medical arrangement	44	33	11	3	3.2	Accepted
2	Spouse and friends should understood the nature of the work	34	33	21	3	3.0	Accepted
3	Increase in allowance	56	23	12	0	3.4	Accepted
4	Off-duty should be observed	54	23	12	2	3.4	Accepted
5	Provision of staff quarters	38	24	20	9	3.0	Accepted
6	Proper lightning	44	33	11	3	3.2	Accepted
7	Security	39	32	15	5	3.1	Accepted

Criterion Mean=2.50

The table 4 shows the result of the responses and findings, the mean (x) and the decision. It shows that the following strategic should be immediately pursued if the federal university libraries in south-south Nigeria can compete with their counterparts who are running shift duty in federal university libraries in other geo-political zone of Nigeria. Proper medical arrangement which is rated (3.2) should be established, spouse and friends should understood the nature of the work is rated (3.0), allowance which is (3.4) should be increased to encourage librarians on shift duty. Off-duty should be observed is rated (3.4), provision of staff quarters (3.0) as well as proper lightning of the library environment which is rated at (3.2) to enable library users and librarians to see properly as well as adequate security which is rated (3.1) should be put in place.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions were made: Shift duty in academic libraries has contributed immensely to the following such as academic advancement, broaden user’s horizon, better performance, excellent grades, and study independently. To this end, for academic to achieve success and

rapid growth in educational development and productivity the introduction of shift duty should be vital.

**Recommendations**

Shift duty is paramount in every academic library. If librarians are to achieve the aims and objective of their respective libraries, they should try as much as possible to introduce shift duty in their respective libraries in other to encourage users and researchers to go extra mile in achieving their academic pursuit. As stated in table three above, the following strategic should be adhering to achieve this purpose; proper medical arrangement, increase in allowances, spouse and family members should understand the nature of their jobs, off-duty should be observed to enable librarians who have done shift to rest, provision of staff quarters for librarians as well as proper lightening of the library environment.

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