

ADOPTION OF KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION PRACTICES IN SELECTED NORTH-WEST NIGERIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Muhammed Ali Fakandu¹ and Dr. Charles Kamau Maina²

Department of Library and Information Science School of Education, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya¹, Department of Library and Information Science School of Education, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya²

[1aliyufakandu@gmail.com](mailto:aliyufakandu@gmail.com) kamauwamaina@gmail.com²

Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to establish whether Federal university libraries in North-West Nigeria have adopted knowledge organization practices (KOP).

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study applied descriptive research and had a target population of three hundred and ninety-three (393) librarians and purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 191 librarians. Both questionnaire and interview schedule were used for data collection. A total of 175 (91.6%) out of 191 copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned. Descriptive statistical methods were used in analyzing the data collected while tables, frequencies, percentages and charts were used for tabulation and presentation.

Findings: The study found out that the available knowledge in the university libraries are well organized and accessible. The study found out that there are various methods of organizing knowledge and the organization of knowledge in university libraries was done using a classification scheme while expert-based knowledge is not given more attention.

Implication: The adoption of knowledge organization practices in university libraries would not be effective considering that expert-based knowledge is not given more attention as a method of organizing knowledge. Low use of expert-based knowledge in the university libraries would affect decision making, staff competence and service delivery.

Originality/Value: The study recommends the use of expert-based knowledge for effective decision making and service delivery in the university libraries and to ensure proper knowledge organization.

Keywords: Knowledge Organization University Libraries

Paper type: Empirical research

1.0 Introduction

Knowledge organization entails classifying and organizing information materials on a shelf, use of subject headings that provide more detailed access, and authority files that control variant versions of key information. Knowledge organisation (KO) is a part of knowledge management practices that involves obtaining knowledge from the identified sources and arranging it in a manner for easy retrieval. According to Kassim (2011), knowledge organisation (KO) deal with organizing knowledge in an organisation using methods such as classification schemes, online public access catalogue and institutional repositories among others. Almaadida (2005) identified three major ways organization can organize the available knowledge. The approaches include: selection of valuable knowledge for conservation, documentation, archiving and reloading the memory

from time to time. Methods of organizing knowledge differ with institutions just like in libraries that have systematic methods of organizing knowledge know as classification schemes. The application of classification scheme in institutional libraries also differs from type of library to another.

Knowledge organization according to the Council of Library and Information Resources (2014) include: the use of classification schemes that organize materials at a general level, subject headings that provide more detailed access. The role of knowledge organization cannot be overemphasized in knowledge management (KM) practices. Neumann and Tomé (2011) were of the view that knowledge organization should be available at the right time; it should be reported and written in a language that is understood by people working in the organization. They stressed that organization of knowledge is paramount to

knowledge management because it allowed easy and fast retrieval of knowledge in organizations and making the services more efficient. Organization of knowledge assist users to identify, retrieve and access knowledge created and stored in the past as well as in the present.

According to the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) (2003), the rationale for knowledge management in libraries and information communities is to provide support and improve the understanding of all information professionals on the benefits of knowledge management in their respective organizations. To achieve its objectives, IFLA developed a programme of activities geared towards supporting professional librarians facilitating the application of knowledge management in their organizations.

The IFLA activities include: working collaboratively with other sections on various aspects of knowledge management; sharing best practices; investigating how professional associations' influence and support knowledge management practices; and to support a knowledge management section website as a repository of knowledge management in libraries. These activities would go a long way in improving library services.

However, in the developing world, knowledge management practice in university libraries has not been well adopted. Yaacob, Jamaluddin and Jusoff (2010) in a study on knowledge management and challenging roles of academic libraries in developing countries observed that academic libraries have not relinquished their role and interest as information providers, which pose challenges of KM practices to the information professionals. In a case study by Jain (2007) that aimed at establishing whether academic librarians in East and South Africa were practicing information management (IM) or knowledge management revealed that most of the participating librarians 65% considered themselves as information managers. Jain (2012) identified some of the impediments towards successful knowledge management in university libraries to include: lack of sharing culture, insufficient budget, lack of central knowledge management policy, lack of define guidelines for knowledge management, lack of incentive, and staff training among others.

Globally, organizations have started to recognize, create, transform, and distribute

knowledge and have a knowledge management activities in place (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). The primary focus of many organizations has been to develop new applications of information technology (IT) to support the digital capture, storage, retrieval, and distribution of organization's explicitly documented knowledge (North and Kumta, 2014). Other organizations believe that most important knowledge is tacit knowledge which can be shared by creating a culture in the organization. It has also been observed that knowledge management is not just about capturing, storing, and transferring information; the pattern of interaction between people, technologies, and techniques is also important (Bhatt, 2001). Knowledge management has been studied on different aspects such as performance and knowledge effectiveness in developed nations; however, how the developing nations are organizing knowledge has not been studied. This motivated the researchers to take up the study of knowledge organization in university libraries.

Murtala, Rajeev and Mustapha (2017) study on the use of knowledge organization tools in Indian libraries revealed that access to knowledge organization tools was not effective due to lack ICT and limited access to the tools hindered them from accessing knowledge. Sangeeta, Sumedha and Aparna (2015) study on impacts of knowledge management capability in Indian organisation revealed that Indian organizations have realized the importance of managing knowledge using different approaches and relay more on creating knowledge infrastructure capability through process such knowledge organization.

In Nigerian, study such as Kassim (2011) on knowledge management strategies implementation in academic libraries in Nigeria established that ineffective knowledge organization by librarians through poor storage, lack of expert based knowledge and lack of mentorship affecting knowledge management implementation in academic libraries. This therefore, means that poor organization can lead to inaccessibility of knowledge by librarians, poor competence and poor service delivery in libraries. This motivated the need to study on knowledge organization in university libraries.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

University libraries in Nigerian are facing a series of knowledge organization challenges ranging from poor storage, lack of expert based knowledge and lack of mentorship affecting knowledge management implementation in academic libraries among others as shown in the background which is likely to impact on librarians' professional development and henceforth affecting their performance. However, the cause of these challenges in North-West Nigerian Federal university libraries is not known.

Knowledge organization as discussed in the forgoing literature point to one fact that is highly regarded in the business world as a strategic tool to their competitive advantage. With the adoption of knowledge organisation that enhance performance, libraries will remain relevant in provision of services for the support of their parent organizations. This study aimed at establishing how the North-West Nigerian federal university libraries organized their knowledge to enhance knowledge services delivery

1.3 Objective of the Study

- To establish how frequent knowledge is organized for service delivery in University libraries in North West, Nigeria
- To assess the methods of knowledge organization in University libraries in North West, Nigeria
- To assess the level of accessibility of knowledge in University libraries in North West, Nigeria

1.4 Research Questions

- How frequent is knowledge organized in University libraries in North West, Nigeria?
- What are the methods of knowledge organization in University libraries in North West, Nigeria?
- How accessible is the acquired knowledge in University libraries in North West, Nigeria?

2.0 Literature Review

Knowledge organization is intended to encompass all types of schemes for organizing information and promoting knowledge management. Knowledge organization entails classifying and organizing materials such as books on a shelf, subject headings that provide more detailed access, and authority files that control variant versions of key information. According to Hjørland

(2007), knowledge organization (KO) is the arrangement of information materials so as to make accessible to persons seeking them. He further stated that KO involved every method of indexing, abstracting, cataloguing, classification, records management, bibliography, among others. This implies that the essence of knowledge organization is to serve as a bridge between the user and information, ensure that there are easy access and retrieval of information and easy to identify an object of interest and improved service delivery. Alegbeleye (2010) used the term knowledge organization instead of knowledge taxonomy, knowledge storage, knowledge recording and explained that it consists a number of activities, including identification of messages, identification of texts, description of document in which texts are represented.

Alhawary, Irtaimah and Hamdan (2011) study on building a knowledge repository in Jordan University which aimed at assessing how effective the university repository in knowledge organization was for easy access by users revealed that students and researchers find it difficult in searching information even with the emergence of e-library.

The study further revealed that libraries can win the heart of their users through building of the repository and making it accessible. Wong and Aspinwall (2004) study on characterizing knowledge management in the small business environment ascertained that there was less knowledge asset in the small organization, and that makes the small business organizing knowledge easier. The study equally provided a suggestion that it is easier for small business to organize the types of knowledge available. The above study succeeded in pointing out that the accessibility of knowledge was a worrying situation; meaning that even with the present information technology facilities, some organization experience challenges in organizing their knowledge. The present study was interested in finding out how accessible is the available knowledge organized in university libraries.

Sajjad (2005) researched on integration of knowledge transfer and knowledge storage: A Holistic Approach used different models' approach to assess knowledge transfer and storage. The result of the research showed that Web based technology is a powerful method that allows individuals and organization used to organized knowledge from

different areas. This therefore, means that the finding of the above study cannot be generalized because the outcome of the study was based on organization and the study only recognized the web-based technology as a method of organizing knowledge while other methods are ignored. This indicates organization used various methods and strategies to organize knowledge, the university libraries have systematic methods of organizing knowledge. As such, this study sought to find out what methods libraries used to organize the available knowledge.

A study by Bharadwaj, Chauhan and Raman (2015) on the impacts of knowledge management capabilities on knowledge management effectiveness in Indian organizations observed that it is important for organizations to organize knowledge in a user friendly and easily accessible form. Explicit knowledge can be stored or organized as best practices or lessons learned databases. While the conversion process of tacit knowledge makes available corporate portals for accessing the expertise locator system. The above assertion means individuals apply their tacit knowledge to organized explicit knowledge.

Usoro and Effiong (2015) study on knowledge management in 47 academic libraries in Akwa-Ibom state revealed that the major activities adopted in academic libraries were knowledge organization. The study equally revealed that the major method of organizing explicit knowledge was through library of congress classification scheme. Financial pressure was identified as the major challenges of knowledge management practices among academic libraries in the state. This equally affects knowledge organization as a method of arranging knowledge for easy access.

However, Nemati (2002) observed that; knowledge organization is not only important for the effective use of knowledge but also very vital in reusing it when needed. From the above study, it is observed that knowledge was easier to organize in business sector due to the organization structure. This might not be the same in university libraries. The ideal way of organizing knowledge in any types of library is the use of classification schemes.

3.0 Methodology

This study applied descriptive research and had a target population of three hundred and ninety-three (393) librarians from the selected north-west Nigerian university libraries. The sample size of the study was 191 and each university library sample was calculated proportionately by using a formula recommended by Krejcie and Morgan. Both questionnaires and interview schedule were used for data collection. Pilot study was conducted in Gusau University Library and data analyzed to ensure validity and reliability of the instruments. Descriptive statistic method was used in analyzing the data collected into tables, frequencies, percentages and charts were used for tabulation and presentation.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

The objective of the study sought to determine the knowledge acquisition practices in selected university libraries. In order to determine the knowledge organization in libraries the following question were administered: how frequent does your organized knowledge, what methods does your library used to organized knowledge, and how accessible is the organized knowledge in your library. Knowledge organization is a KM practice that is concerned with the systematic organization of knowledge for easy accessibility. The role of knowledge organization cannot be overemphasized because when knowledge is systematically organized, it assists users to identify, retrieve and access knowledge created.

4.1. Frequent Organization of Knowledge

This study sought to establish how frequently knowledge was organized. To establish how frequent the library organized knowledge, respondents were asked to indicate how frequently libraries organized knowledge. The responses show that knowledge is frequently organized in the selected university libraries with 163 (93%). Out of a total of 175 respondents, 161(35%) respondents indicated that libraries organized knowledge very frequently. 102 (58%) respondents indicated that libraries organized knowledge frequently. 8(5%) respondents indicated that libraries organized knowledge fairly frequently while only 4(2%) respondents indicated that libraries do not organize knowledge frequently. See figure 4.1 for summary on frequent organization of explicit knowledge.

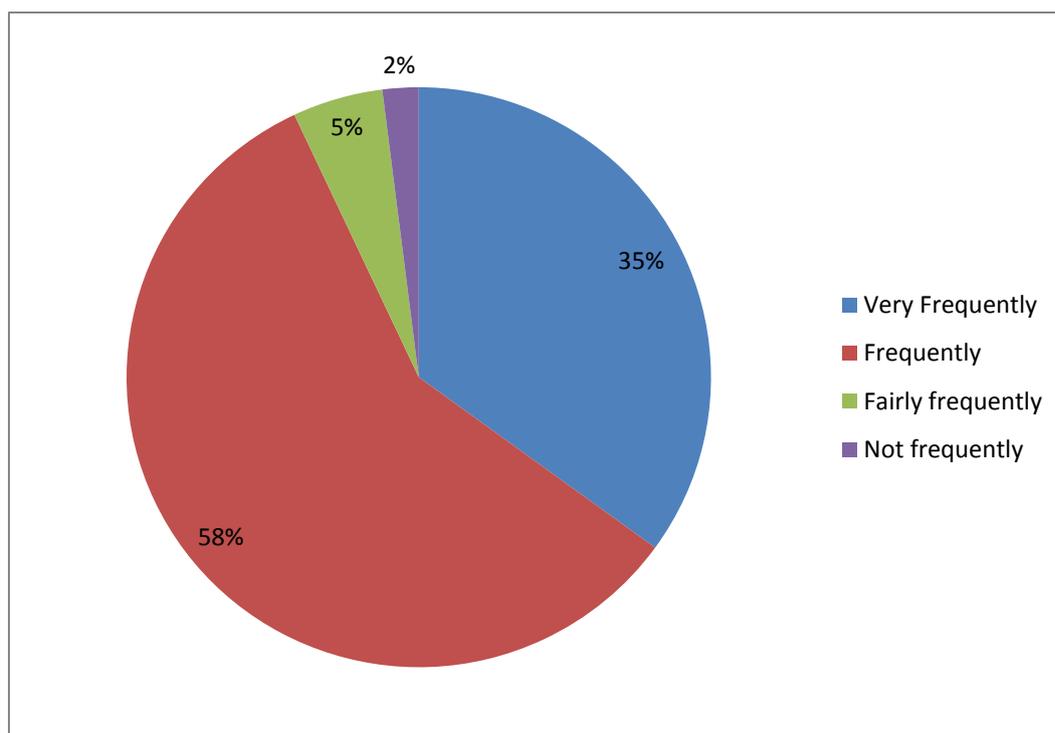


Figure 4.1: Frequent Organization of Knowledge

Source: Research data 2018

The adoption of knowledge management practices in university libraries will be easy considering that available knowledge acquired in the selected libraries are well organized. This finding coincides with Bharadwaj, Chauhan and Raman's (2015) study on the impact of knowledge management capabilities on knowledge management effectiveness in Indian organizations which revealed that knowledge was frequently organized in Indian organization libraries. These findings further corroborate with Usoro and Effiong (2015) findings on knowledge management in academic libraries in Akwa-Ibom state which revealed that the major knowledge management activities in academic libraries were knowledge organization.

Nemati (2002) observed the frequent organization of knowledge in the library is not only important for the effective use of knowledge but library statistic today was becoming easy to compile and analyze due to frequent organization of information resources and explicit knowledge.

To validate this finding, similar question was asked to the university librarians during the interview and one of them asserted that *"library staff are frequently engaged in shelve management on daily bases and the essence was to provide a*

platform for library staff and users to have easy access of available explicit knowledge and other information resources organized (University librarian 2, 7th march, 2018). Another university librarian reported that "organizing library materials for easy accessibility was the mandatory service provided in the library"(University librarian 4, 14th March, 2018).

The adoption of knowledge management practices in university libraries for enhancing successful service delivery will be easier as practice amenable to knowledge management is in place.

4.2. Methods of Knowledge Organization

As a strategy to probe further o how libraries organized their knowledge, a question was asked. The finding confirmed that libraries still managed information not knowledge as 108(53%) of the total respondents' classification and only 11(5%) indicated expert knowledge. Table 4.9 vividly show that 108(53%) respondents indicated that classification scheme is the methods used in organizing knowledge in their libraries; 47(23%) respondents indicated that OPAC was used as another method of organizing knowledge; 38(19%) respondents indicated institutional repository as method of organizing knowledge 11(5%) respondents indicated that experts knowledge base is used as the method of organizing knowledge. See table 4.1 for a summary of findings on methods of organizing knowledge.

Table 4.1 Methods of Organizing Knowledge

s/n	Items	ABU	BUK	FUD	UDUS
1	Using classification schemes	46(49%)	36(64%)	6(46%)	20(48%)
2	Using OPAC	22(24%)	9(16%)	4(31%)	12(29%)
3	Using Institutional repository	19(20%)	8(14%)	2(15%)	9(21%)
4	Using expert based knowledge	6(7%)	3(6%)	1(8%)	1(2%)

This above finding shows that the majority of the university libraries used classification schemes to organize knowledge. The adoption of knowledge management in university libraries will be faced with challenges considering that expert-based knowledge is not given more attention as a method of organizing knowledge. Limited used of expert based knowledge in the university libraries can affect service delivery. This finding corroborates Kolawale (2015) study on knowledge acquisition and transfer mechanism which revealed that academic libraries identified lack of expert knowledge as one of the major problems in knowledge organized.

To further probe, a similar question was asked to the university librarians during the interview and one of them asserted that *"classification scheme is used for organizing knowledge and the library also used ICT equipment to facilitate the process (University librarian 3. 12th March, 2018)*. Another one of the respondents reported that *"classification schemes are widely used in university libraries to organized information resources"*. He stressed that *the library avoided online classification exercise and preferred the*

manual method of classifying knowledge in the library (University librarian 4, 14th March, 2018).

This was clear evidence that classification schemes are mostly used in the university libraries under study. This collaborates Jain (2007) whose finding established that most academic libraries in East and South Africa were practicing information management and the librarians considered themselves as information managers.

4.3 Accessibility of Knowledge

Knowledge stored must be accessible by library users. In this connection, respondents were asked about knowledge accessibility and the findings revealed that 89(51%) respondents indicated that knowledge was very accessible; 78(44%) respondents indicated that the organized knowledge is accessible; 7(4%) respondents indicated that organized knowledge is fairly accessible while only 1(0.6%) respondents indicated that organized knowledge was not accessible. This finding shows that knowledge in selected federal universities' libraries is accessible as indicated by majority respondents with 95% response. Figure 4.2 summarizes the finding on the accessibility of knowledge organized.

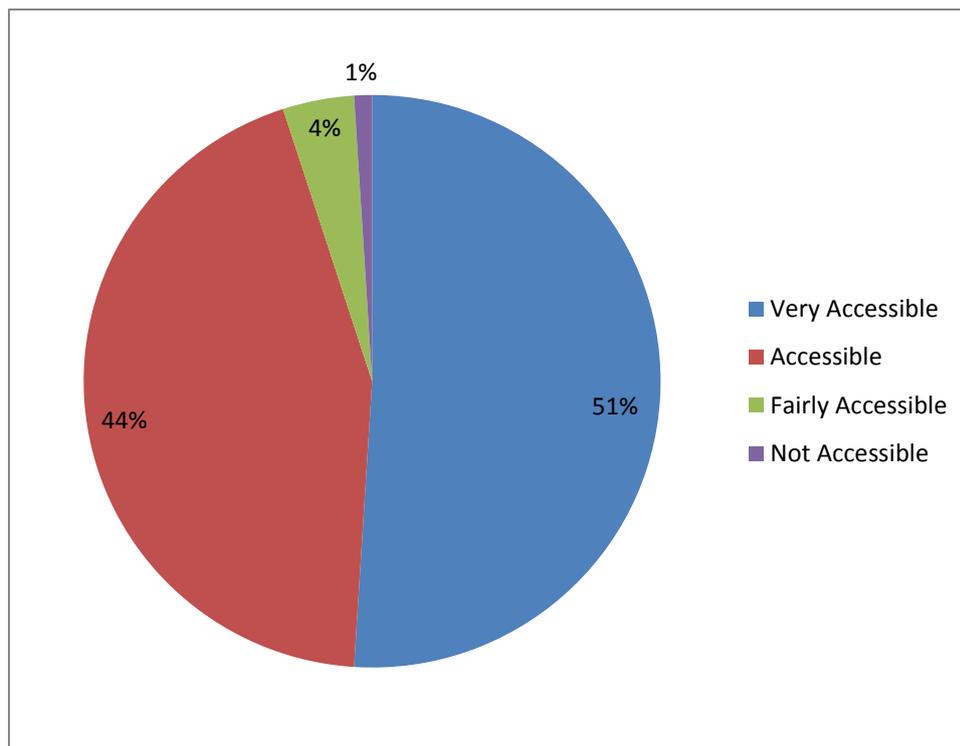


Figure 4.2: Accessibility of Knowledge

Source: Research data 2018

This finding shows that the majority of the university libraries organize knowledge for easy accessibility by users. These findings corroborate Alhawary, Irtaimah and Hamdan (2011) study on building a knowledge repository which revealed that university libraries win the heart of their users through the building of repositories and making organized knowledge accessible. This, therefore, means, adoption of knowledge management practice as a function of knowledge organization in university libraries can be successful.

5.0. Conclusion

The organization of knowledge is one of the key functions of libraries. This study established that the acquired knowledge is very well organized in the university libraries. The study confirmed that the university libraries used classification schemes to effectively organize the acquired knowledge more

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than any other method while the used of expert based knowledge to organize knowledge was low. The university librarians interviewed equally attested that libraries used classification schemes to organized knowledge. However, the adoption of knowledge management in university libraries would not be effective considering that expert-based knowledge is not given more attention as a method of organizing knowledge. Low used of expert based knowledge in the university libraries would affect decision making, staff competence and service delivery.

6.0. Recommendations

- i. For university libraries to ensure proper organization of knowledge, the use of expert-based knowledge should be introduced for effective decision making and service delivery.

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