

# Creativity behavior of librarians in Nigeria's federal universities

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examined the behavior of librarians in Nigeria's federal universities with regards to their creativity.

**Design/ Methodology/ Approach:** The population of 654 librarians was completely counted and a survey study design of the correlational type was used to elicit data. The tool for gathering data was a questionnaire. A response rate of 79.2% was achieved with 518 respondents who returned the data collecting instrument. At a significance level of 0.05, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the results.

**Research limitation(s):** The survey only included librarians employed by Nigeria's federal universities. Other librarians working in state and private universities were excluded.

**Key finding(s):** The result shows high level of creativity behavior among librarians in federal universities in Nigeria ( $\bar{x}$  =85.45) against the threshold of 80 significance difference exists in the creativity of the librarians based on the universities.

**Practical Implication(s):** The report outlines the evolving position of librarians in Nigeria's federal universities. Much success will still be achieved in the library and greater user satisfaction will be achieved if librarians are allowed to use their discretion in service delivery rather than being engrossed in routines.

**Contribution to knowledge:** The study revealed that if conducive atmosphere to operate is created for the librarians, more innovative services will be enjoyed by the library clientele.

**Paper type:** Research

**Keywords:** Creativity, problem solving, ideation, librarians, university libraries, Nigeria.

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## Introduction

Creativity is an essential determinant of viability of any organization, group of workers or an individual. The nature of today's markets presents a high demand within the university libraries with the new concepts of generating novel ideas. The quest to generate a more attractive products and services is equally on the rise. Therefore, for librarians to survive in this century, creativity application in library services is a must. The responsibilities exhibited by librarians demand a higher degree of creativity to be able to perform their role effectively and efficiently. Librarians need to be creative because it takes a creative mind to showcase creativity.

Hassan, Anwar and Rafique (2014) define creativity as an act of bringing something new into existence, it is a novel idea used in solving problem. It is the capability to generate novel ideas for the accomplishment of organizational goals (Ologbo, Khalil & Eugene, 2015; Henriksen, Mishra & Mehta, 2016). Ilako and Ikoja-Odongo (2011) insist that "creativity" can be applied to any new concept introduced in the library and these ideas give room for problem solving. In the Nigerian university libraries, creativity could be used to measure performance at work. This is because the purpose of human development is to make citizens of the society acquire creative and innovative thinking skills that will spur them to action in developing human capacity. The more imaginative and innovative someone becomes, the greater shall be his/her level of self-reliant to improve the value of his personal life, family, community, group, and the society (Akinboye, 2001).

Creative thinking is an essential human skill and resource. It is assumed that the greatest thing any nation can do is to support the development of her people by teaching them how to be more creative and innovative (Akinboye, 2001). This is because the quality of human future is determined by the quality of thinking. Creativity helps human-being to obtain the most excellent experiences and resources. Librarians are not left out in this development. Creativity is the way of dynamic change, leap of progress and surprise that will propel library organizations, catapult careers, and generate potent growth of librarians as well as the library environment from where they discharge their professional duties.

The essence of creativity is the creation of new and functional ideas principally on the individual ground. It is the most essential and veritable skills needed to succeed in the 21st Century (Henriksen, Mishra & Fisser, 2016; Atabek, 2020). Creativity is an experience that is mostly exercised at the individual level, and it makes use of variables such as personality, motivation, and expertise at the individual level (El Melegy, Mohiuddin, Boronico & Maasher, 2016). Hassan *et al.* (2014) reveals that some organizational structure

like centralization, formalization and work-specialization will negatively reduce employee creativity. Especially, the greater the centralization in an organizational structure, the lower the employees' creativity, and that as formalization increase in an organization, it moderately leads to low employees' creativity.

Adeel and Pengcheng (2016) report that because of the uniqueness of creativity to individual and organization advantages in considerable areas, organizations are investing heavily on creativity development of their personnel. This is because creativity has become an important determinant of performance, success, and survival for organizations. Creativity is not a common phenomenon in organizations, especially, libraries. By implication, not all personnel in the libraries are creative. Creativity of librarians is evident in services they render to library users, such as cataloguing and classification of library materials, selective dissemination of information, answering reference queries, information re-packaging, etc. The use of online cataloguing has positively affected the transition of manual cataloguing to copy cataloguing. Creativity has also made it possible for the library users to access some of the services render by the university library remotely. Library clientele can log into library website or individual portal to submit their reference queries, which within the quickest possible time can be attended to by the librarian in charge.

Therefore, to reinvent traditional reference services and transition into knowledge services, where librarians will actively participate in resolving library issues, university libraries should adopt new technologies. It should be highlighted, however, that the needs of library patrons in the digital age go beyond papers and information and instead focus on the transformation of information into goods and services. As a result, librarians must be creative to adapt to the changing needs of their clientele.

### **Literature Review**

Creativity is important for the continued existence of any organization. Stanley, Slater and Tomas (2008) posit that there are different variables influencing innovativeness and development of individuals from within and the without of organization. Brunvand, Soheili and Khasseh (2015) emphasized that one of the significant objectives of every creative action is improving the execution and the viability of the association. This can be achieved when creativity in organization increases.

Biranvand, Soheili and Khasseh (2015) stress that creativity in libraries can be researched from interior and outside angles. The inner angle oversees the states of creativity appearing among the staff of the library, while outside perspective thinks of it from the end of

library clientele. This study focuses on the internal aspect of creativity. Librarians cannot foster creativity in their clientele until they are creative themselves. The level of creativity exhibited by library administrators largely determines the quality of the services they offer.

Librarians should be creative and offer the necessary conditions for their innovation to increase the value of services. Librarians should exercise creativity and create the conditions necessary for it to flourish to increase the value of their services. Librarians must have positive work disposition, positive mental condition and great state of administration to give the best service that are convenient and at the very least cost. It is therefore important to conduct thorough research on the creativity of librarians in libraries, as well as their work, working conditions, and personal behaviors.

Tabarsa, Mahbub, Ismaili and Ismaili (2010) studied the effect of organizational entrepreneurial culture on creativity in public libraries in Iran, and found a strong link between the work value element and other organizational culture components, such as courage, tolerating diversity in creativity, and natural belligerence; however, the state of risk taking, open communication, collaboration, and participation is poor. Arabi (2012) survey the state of creativity by librarians in Kohkiluyeh Buyerahmad province, the result revealed that their level of creativity was above average. Similarly, the outcome of the study conducted by Kahzadi, Soheili and Familruhani (2013) in the province of Kermanshah found that both work-related and non-work-related environmental factors influenced librarians' creativity. Sorour (2021) submits that creativity is the whole essence of meaningful work roles in organization.

Olajide-Williams and Popoola (2013) stress that with current advance in the study of creativity, the idea that creativity is a gift residing within a few individuals was replaced by the belief that creativity potential is an attribute of individuals. Even though creativity was considered as exclusively based on internal factors, environmental factors have a strong effect on the creative production of workers in any organization. It is therefore an undebatable fact that when librarians' creativity is improved, the library and library users will become happier through improvements of quality and quantity of output produced.

One characteristic trait of creativity is that it tends to appear where it is less anticipated. This is because it may occur unexpectedly, most often, in a brainstorming session where one sits to find solutions to identified problem. However, one must begin with a specified problem. This is because without a problem in mind to solve, even if creativity-boosting methods are applied, it will be

difficult to come up with new initiative (Stenmark, 2000; Kaiserfeld, 2020). Jantz (2013) remarks that creativity is linked with vast component of surprise and most creative acts are unexpected. Therefore, it's possible to have no idea who will take part in a creative act, what that act will be, when it will happen, or how.

In library as an organization, experiences are facilitated when people are allowed to use their discretion on how they do their work schedule as well as when information is of high standards (McManus, 2005). Amabile (1983) states that individuals will perform more than expected if they have interest in the work they do, rather than threatened them to work. When individual is given high level of discretion to work, especially with relation to the use of time, it will facilitate creativity. Kaserfeld (2020) maintains that when individuals are allowed to work in conformity with their own creative styles, it propels creative act. It is noteworthy that creativity in organization can occurs in individual and team level (Ashiq, Jabeen & Mahmood, 2022; Olson, 1999).

Creativity is germane to accomplishment of the goals, visions and aspirations of any profession, library, and information studies inclusive. Coveney (2008) assessed the organizational atmosphere for creativity in a United Kingdom (UK) Public Library service, he found that library managers in UK Public Library are keen to recruit creative people since it is just the creative personnel that will probably design approaches to transform a drilling work into an intriguing one. Atata, Oji and Tom (2014) confirmed that if library administrators are well focused about creating creativity in their library administration, they must develop and create conducive workplace for library staff to discharge their creative potential. Therefore, the achievement and survival of any library administrations relies upon the creativity of library personnel if they will guarantee their existence in the year to come.

### **Statement of the problem**

In any organization, creativity plays a vital role and is a key factor in developing a competitive advantage over others. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to prioritize and invest in enhancing the creativity of their employees to improve work performance. However, for librarians in universities, their work is often routine-based and revolves around acquiring, processing, organizing, and disseminating knowledge to library patrons. It has been observed through preliminary investigations and existing literature that the level of creativity among librarians is low. This low level of creativity poses a serious concern to university administrators and library managers, particularly considering the significant amount of money spent on salaries and emoluments to librarians in Nigeria.

Thus, this study aims to explore the creative behavior of librarians in Nigeria's federal universities to improve their performance and service delivery.

**The specific objectives of the study are to:**

- i. assess the level of creativity demonstrated by librarians in federal universities across Nigeria.
- ii. investigate whether there is a significant variation in the creativity behaviors of librarians based on their respective universities.

**Research question**

- i. What is the level of creativity demonstrated by librarians in Nigeria's federal universities?

**Hypothesis**

Ho1 There is no significant variation in the creativity behaviors of librarians based on their respective universities.

**Methodology**

In this study, a descriptive survey of correlational type was used as the research design. The study population consisted of 654 librarians across forty (40) federal universities, all of whom were enumerated. The instrument used to collect the data was a questionnaire, which had a reliability coefficient of 0.94 and was administered by 5 research assistants who had received training in its administration. A total of 518 were retrieved and deemed usable, resulting in a response rate of 79.2%. At a significance level of 0.05, descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the study's data.

**Result analysis and discussion**

**Demographic profile of respondents**

Table 1 provides information about the respondents' demographic traits (*see Appendix*).

From the demographic information in Table 1, Librarian II 134(25.9%) constituted the highest workforce. Librarian profession was dominated by male 306(59.1%) gender wise. There are more married librarians 432(83.4%) than single 81(15.6%). Majority 225(43.4%) falls within 30-39 years on account of age while 325 (62.7%) had certifications for a master's degree based on highest academic qualification respectively.

## Research Question

Research question one: What is the level of creativity demonstrated by librarians in Nigeria's federal universities?

The level of creativity by librarians is presented in Table 2 (*see Appendix*)

Table 3 displays the results of the librarians' test norm for creativity in Nigeria's federal universities.

Grand mean = 85.45, Maximum score = 108, Interval =  $\frac{108}{3} = 36$ ,

Classification = High, Moderate, Low

Table 3

Interval	Range	Level	Frequency	Percentage
1-36		Low	3	0.6
37-72		Moderate	22	4.2
73-108	85.45	High	493	95.2

The result of test norm of creativity scale in Table 3 shows a score of 1-36, indicating low creativity, 37-72 moderate creativity and 73-108 high creativity of the respondents. Meanwhile, the overall mean score ( $\bar{x} = 85.45$  SD = 10.32) of the respondents is within the interval 73-108, one can deduce that the creativity of the librarians is high. Most respondents stated that they are engaged in their work and find it interesting and gratifying, and that they are confident in their ability to apply creativity to a variety of tasks at work; creativity is important to them and demonstrate originality in their work.

Others factors include: their prior experience increases their creativity at work; they are confident and committed in working with their organizations; will like to work with others to maximize innovations; are not afraid when facing challenges at work; are able to achieve majority of their personal goals at work; their personal contacts enhances their level of creativity in workplace; believes that their personality trait make them more creative in workplace; have some ideas that something would work better in the discharge of their duties and possess the capacity to see how to navigate through certain experience in the work place.

Since creativity is an idea generated to perform an assigned function. It is not ambiguous to conclude that the personality traits and personal contacts of the respondents greatly and positively affected their creativity. Creative people are tenacious, the challenges that the workplace poses will further strengthens the creative mind to achieve more, rather than becoming a breaking point for creative personnel.

**Hypothesis one:** There is no significant variation in the creativity behaviors of librarians based on their respective universities.

Ho:1 There is no significant variation in the creativity behaviors of librarians based on their respective universities.

*Table 4: One –way ANOVA showing the differences in the Creativity of Librarians by Universities*

	<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>Degree of freedom</b>	<b>Mean square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Universities	7470.503	39	191.551	1.926	.001
Error	47543.885	478	99.464		
Total	55014.388	517			

Table 4 showed that there were significant variations in the creativity behavior of librarians based on their respective universities ( $F = 1.926, P < .05$ ). The hypothesis is rejected.

The result further revealed a pairwise difference from one university to the others. Therefore, it is easy to draw the conclusion that the level of creativity among librarians in Nigeria's federal universities greatly differs.

### **Discussion of Findings**

From the study, 493 (95.2%) respondents had high level of creativity while only 3 (0.6%) had low level of creativity. These responses revealed that librarians in Nigeria displayed high level of creativity behavior in their work environment. From the result analysis, majority of the librarians investigated (95.2%) were interested in their work and find it rewarding. This assertion corroborates the findings of Sorour (2021). Similarly, the finding of this study is in consonance with the submission of Henriksen, Mishra and Fisser (2016) and Atabek (2020) who maintained that creativity is linked with generation of useful ideas primarily at individual level. If an employee lack interest in what they do at the individual level, it will be difficult to exhibit creative behaviors. The finding also revealed that 96.3% respondents were confident of performing creatively on different tasks at work, 93.8% affirmed the importance of creativity at work to them, 89% demonstrates originality in their work. This is consonance with existing findings of Elisondo, Donolo and Rinaudo (2013), Mamo and Amidu (2015) and Borghini (2005) who stressed that creativity in libraries encompasses the development of new ideas, new solution to a problem, new methods device, or new artistic objects, Borghini (2005) claimed that novelty/originality and



value are the two characteristics that are most frequently associated with creativity.

Furthermore, the study revealed that previous experience has a significant role in determining the creativity of librarians  $\bar{x} = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ . Other factors that showed the creativity of librarians includes: their confidence and commitment in working with their organization (93.1%), working with others to maximize innovation, (94%), being not afraid when facing challenges at work (92.9%) and like taking risks at work (82.4%). It should be noted that all the indicators of measurement positively affirmed that the level of creativity of the librarians in Nigeria is high. The results confirm an earlier submission by Coveney (2008) who evaluated the organizational climate for creativity in a public library service in the United Kingdom (UK) and discovered that libraries and librarians must take concrete steps and be committed to doing so to unleash the desire for creative acts that already exists within them. The outcome of this study is a welcome development especially in the field of Library and Information Science, the reason is because, when librarians begin to apply knowledge got from colleagues to job schedule, library users will continue to enjoy functional and adequate service delivery. Watson (2008) submitted that the success and survival of any library services depends on the creativity of library managers to take responsibility for it to occur and develop within the library operations. Therefore, librarians in Nigeria need to sustain the tempo for the survival of library practice.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study examined the creativity behavior of librarians in the Nigeria's federal universities. Creative thinking, being the bedrock of organizational performance has high level exhibition among the respondents. This is reflected in the level of their confidence and commitment to the work they do. One critical trait of creative personnel is in the demonstration of originality in their work. Creative personnel have capacity to perform different task at work and are not afraid in facing challenges at workplace. Library services is pinned down in routine. All these attributes have been established in the study. Formalization has been discovered to be a great impediment on creativity. The study therefore recommend that library managers should place little emphasis on centralization, formalization, and work specialization among the librarians in Nigeria. When librarians are allowed to use their instinct and insight, the outcome/ result will be amazing. It will in turn affect positively the perception of library users about the librarians and library services they offer. When this is done, the level of library patronage will also be enhanced.

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### Appendix

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Job Status	Frequency	Percentage
Assistant Librarian	109	21.0
Librarian II	134	25.9
Librarian I	111	21.4
Senior Librarian	85	16.4
Principal Librarian	51	9.8
Deputy Librarian	23	4.4
University Librarian	5	1.0
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	306	59.1
Female	212	40.9
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	81	15.6
Married	432	83.4
Divorced	1	0.2
Separated	1	0.2
Widowed	3	0.6
Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-29 years	22	4.2
30-39 years	225	43.4
40-49 years	153	29.5
50-59 years	97	18.7
60-69 years	21	4.1
Highest Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Ph.D.	70	13.5
M.Phil	29	5.6
Master	325	62.7

<b>Bachelor</b>	94	18.1
How long have you been working in this library	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1-9 years</b>	320	61.8
<b>10-19 years</b>	117	22.6
<b>20-29 years</b>	44	8.5
<b>30-39 years</b>	36	6.9
<b>40-49 years</b>	1	0.2
Section	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Management Unit</b>	55	10.6
<b>Cataloguing/Classification Unit</b>	104	20.1
<b>Acquisition Unit</b>	70	13.5
<b>Circulation Unit</b>	85	16.4
<b>Reference Unit</b>	62	12.0
<b>Virtual Unit</b>	13	2.5
<b>Reprographic Unit</b>	31	6.0
<b>IT &amp; Computer Section Unit</b>	41	7.9
<b>Serial Unit</b>	43	8.3
<b>Audio-Visual</b>	14	2.7
Years of work experience	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1-9 years</b>	243	46.9
<b>10-19 years</b>	157	30.3
<b>20-29 years</b>	72	13.9
<b>30-39 years</b>	40	7.7
<b>40-49 years</b>	4	0.8
<b>50 + years</b>	2	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Table 2: Level of creativity of the librarians in Nigeria's federal universities*

S/N	Creativity behaviours of librarians	SD	D	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	S.D
<b>1</b>	I find my work to be rewarding and fulfilling since I am interested in it.	7	18	277	216	3.3	0.6
		(1.4%)	(3.5%)	(53.5%)	(41.7%)	6	2
<b>2</b>	I am certain that I can apply creativity to a variety of professional	7	12	293	206	3.3	0.6
		(1.4%)	(2.3%)	(56.6%)	(39.8%)	5	0

	duties.						
<b>3</b>	Creativity at work is important to me	8	24	280	206	3.3	0.6
		(1.5%)	(4.6%)	(54.1%)	(39.8%)	2	4
<b>4</b>	I demonstrate originality at my work	8	19	294	197	3.3	0.6
		(1.5%)	(3.7%)	(56.8%)	(38.0%)	1	2
<b>5</b>	My previous experience makes me more creative in the workplace	8	17	302	191	3.3	0.6
		(1.5%)	(3.3%)	(58.3%)	(36.9%)	1	1
<b>6</b>	I am assured and devoted to working with my library.	10	26	278	204	3.3	0.6
		(1.9%)	(5.0%)	(53.7%)	(39.4%)	1	6
<b>7</b>	I would like to work with others to maximise innovations	8	23	298	189	3.2	0.6
		(1.5%)	(4.4%)	(57.5%)	(36.5%)	9	2
<b>8</b>	When faced with problems at work, I have no fear.	16	21	284	197	3.2	0.6
		(3.1%)	(4.1%)	(54.8%)	(38.0%)	8	8
<b>9</b>	I am able to achieve most of my personal goals at work	12	34	275	197	3.2	0.6
		(2.3%)	(6.6%)	(53.1%)	(38.0%)	7	8
<b>10</b>	My personal connections help me to be more creative at work	11	30	28	190	3.2	0.6
		(2.1%)	(5.8%)	(55.4%)	(36.7%)	7	6
<b>11</b>	I believe that because of my personality, I'm more creative at work.	10	34	306	168	3.2	0.6
		(1.9%)	(6.6%)	(59.1%)	(32.4%)	2	5
<b>12</b>	I have some	10	23	328	157	3.2	0.6

	suggestions for how to carry out my duties more effectively.	(1.9%)	(4.4%)	(63.3%)	(30.3%)	2	1
<b>13</b>	I possess the ability to recognize how to lar workplace circumstances .	7	19	349	143	3.2	0.5
		(1.4%)	(3.7%)	(67.4%)	(27.6%)	1	7
<b>14</b>	I am adaptable, and can readily develop new solutions.	11	33	311	163	3.2	0.6
		(2.1%)	(6.4%)	(60.0%)	(31.5%)	1	5
<b>15</b>	The opinion of other work colleagues has a positive effect on my creative ability	5	30	332	151	3.2	0.5
		(1.0%)	(5.8%)	(64.1%)	(29.2%)	1	9
<b>16</b>	My colleagues consider me as a creative employee	12	30	316	158	3.2	0.6
		(2.3%)	(5.8%)	(61.4%)	(30.5%)	0	5
<b>17</b>	I look for inspiration from my surroundings to come up with fresh approaches to problems.	8	41	330	139	3.1	0.6
		(1.5%)	(7.9%)	(63.7%)	(26.8%)	6	2
<b>18</b>	I prefer to approach problems in logical way	15	42	317	144	3.1	0.6
		(2.9%)	(8.1%)	(61.2%)	(27.8%)	4	8
<b>19</b>	I am confident that I can develop creative ideas to solve problems and	24	33	316	145	3.1	0.7
		(4.6%)	(6.4%)	(61.0%)	(28.0%)	2	2

	implement solutions						
20	I always see issues as opportunities rather than problems.	17	48	318	135	3.10	0.69
		(3.3%)	(9.3%)	(61.4%)	(26.1%)		
21	I like taking risks at my work	19	72	281	146	3.07	0.75
		(3.7%)	(13.9%)	(54.2%)	(28.2%)		
22	Routine does not impede on my creativity	19	51	330	118	3.06	0.69
		(3.7%)	(9.8%)	(63.7%)	(22.8%)		
23	I am not easily influenced by others	22	58	308	130	3.05	0.73
		(4.2%)	(11.2%)	(59.5%)	(25.1%)		
24	Whether I have the means to do so or not, I rarely dismiss good ideas.	43	85	267	123	2.91	0.85
		(8.3%)	(16.4%)	(51.5%)	(23.7%)		
25	I am content with the compensation I receive at work.	44	107	232	135	2.88	0.89
		(8.5%)	(20.7%)	(44.8%)	(26.1%)		
26	At work, time constraints prevent me from being creative.	32	99	293	94	2.87	0.78
		(6.2%)	(19.1%)	(56.6%)	(18.1%)		
27	I don't adhere to rules and procedures exactly.	47	111	275	85	2.77	0.83
		(9.1%)	(21.4%)	(53.1%)	(16.4%)		
<b>Weighted Mean = 3.17</b>							