Evaluating the Librarian's Role in Organizing Knowledge at University Libraries in Nairobi County

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Abstract

Purpose: It has long been recognized in several sectors that librarians can enhance the efficacy and operational efficiency of knowledge management. Previous research has primarily relied on cross-sectional data projecting that university libraries still need to acknowledge the worth of the role of librarians in managing knowledge. The problem addressed is the gaps in knowledge organization in university libraries. The study was built on the premise of the Role Theory and the Adaptive Structural Theory, with the objective being to evaluate the librarian's role in organizing knowledge at university libraries in Nairobi County.

Methodology: This study used the descriptive survey research design targeting 2180 individuals, consisting of librarian section heads and information science students, who were identified across the two institutions. A sample size of 338 respondents was sampled from this population to take part in the research process. The research used two different sampling techniques. The first technique was the simple random sample method used when selecting the students who participated in the study. The second sampling technique was the censor method, which chose the librarians to participate in the study. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. This comprised 314 students currently enrolled at TUK and UON in the School of Information Science and twelve librarian section heads from each university. The quantitative data collected was analyzed using version 26 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Consequently, a frequency distribution was also employed to analyze the quantitative data obtained during the research.

Results: This showed how often each value occurs in a data set, mainly the mean, median, and mode measures of central tendency. The collected results showed that librarians have the most influence on knowledge management at these institutions. These individuals are essentially responsible for enhancing literacy skills among library users.

Conclusions: The research found that librarians at the university libraries in Nairobi County were essential to the organization of knowledge management. To guarantee the best learning outcomes, it was recommended that these librarians must still create classification systems, allow access to information resources, curate collections, and encourage users to be effectively information literate.

Keywords: *Knowledge Management, Librarian Roles, Information Literacy, University Libraries, Organizing Knowledge*

1.0 Introduction

The issues surrounding knowledge management system deficiencies and librarians' role in addressing them still need to be addressed. As librarians are still getting used to their new jobs, ensuring effective knowledge management is easier. As a result, our study was uniquely positioned to explain how librarians' roles are evolving in enhancing knowledge management. The highlighted issue in this case is the gaps in the knowledge management systems. This study looked at how knowledge management has improved over time for librarians at the university libraries in Nairobi County, shedding light on the intriguing changes in the field.

Knowledge management is primarily determined by human resources, information systems and data management, organizational culture, leadership and management support, technology infrastructure, knowledge management procedures, organizational structure, and communication channels used by these institutions. Knowledge management is crucial to educational institutions' survival and success in the contemporary academic setting (Ansari, 2021). The importance of this research is highlighted by the changing academic and economic landscape, which makes the study of librarian responsibilities in knowledge management even more crucial. The evolving nature of the economy has made knowledge the foundation for success and excellence. The problem facing Kenyan universities is that most still need to utilize their libraries effectively to increase students' access to knowledge and information (Masinde et al., 2021). The main problem is that most universities still use outdated knowledge management approaches. This suggests that students still had to look for books and knowledge physically. This prolongs the search process and restricts the quantity of information that students can access. The problem was that the time-consuming aspect of knowledge management discouraged many students from using these abilities, which hindered their learning.

Bookkeeping has traditionally been the principal duty of librarians worldwide. This implies that these people were in charge of keeping the book up to date (Bonfield et al., 2021). This meant checking that every book was in excellent condition and showed no wear and tear. It also meant guiding all visitors to the library on where to find the necessary books. For instance, librarians served as the library's tour guides in countries like Great Britain. According to the logical assessment by Appleton et al. (2019), this involved collaborating with the library police to take appropriate action against anyone who disobeyed the rules on utilizing library products. However, this position has also evolved. The librarian's role evolved from caretaker to one that entailed more and more information management, which was the first change seen. As a result, they now possess the ability to control knowledge management (Sheikh et al., 2023). These days, records and information are managed even by the local libraries.

Using the Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST), it was possible to comprehend how adopting new ideas, organizational cultures, and roles affects librarians' evolving roles and how information management is affected in university libraries. The Role Theory acted as the framework to show that librarians should transition from their predictive and functional responsibilities in the face of rapid digitization and modify their expertise and offerings to serve their present clients better. This study addresses the gaps in knowledge organization in university libraries and aims to evaluate the librarian's role in organizing knowledge at universities in Nairobi County.

2.0 Methodology

Using a descriptive survey research design, this study looked at how librarians' responsibilities have evolved and how they have enhanced knowledge management. This qualitative technique made it easier to determine how the target public felt about librarians' increasing duties and responsibilities and how this shift in duties and obligations will affect the knowledge management process. The idea was to look at these people's opinions and remarks and compare them with information from past exclusive surveys.

Sample Size

Three hundred thirty-eight (338) individuals were selected for the questionnaire and interview responses. This involved thirty-four (24) librarian section heads, twelve (12) from each university, and three hundred and fourteen (314) information science students who are now enrolled at TUK and UON. For each person to be eligible, they had to have attended one of the two institutions. Moreover, only fully autonomous persons may be involved in the inquiry. Participants in interviews should be at least 21 years old to be excluded due to age restrictions.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

In the study, two different sample techniques were used. The initial approach used to select the students to participate in the study was the simple random sampling method. This was used to help verify that the data collected depicts how this role diversity of librarians has affected knowledge management by verifying that each student's response was based on their accurate assessment of how they felt the roles of librarians had changed and their personal experience of how these changes had affected knowledge management. The second sampling technique was the censor method, which was used to select the librarians participating in the study.

Data Collection

At both institutions, scheduled interviews with the sampled population were conducted. The data collection aimed to better understand librarians' roles in the UON and TUK libraries and how those roles affected their capacity to manage knowledge and information efficiently. Based on the librarians' evaluations of how their roles had evolved over their time at the organization, more details regarding the changing responsibilities of the staff were obtained.

In addition, semi-structured questionnaires were used to determine what participants thought about knowledge management and careers for UON and TUK librarians. The first element of the questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions that were limited to each participant's demographic data. In the second and third sections of the questionnaire, both closed-ended and open-ended questions addressed the research subject. The closed-ended portions of this survey used a Likert scale to provide a numerical assessment of the respondents' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 26, was used to analyze the data (SPSS). The raw data that had been gathered was cleaned and examined to extract pertinent data for conclusions. The precise descriptive statistics simplified the data, including percentages, standard deviations, and averages. The findings were presented with text, tables, graphs, and charts. The frequency at which each value appears in a data collection, m, was displayed using a frequency distribution, namely the mean, median, and mode measures of central tendency. A theme analysis was carried out using the information gathered from the interview schedules.

Validity and Reliability

The operational framework was used to choose the questionnaire measuring items, resulting in content validity. To confirm the content validity of the questionnaires, an additional 10% of the population chosen from the study area but not included in the study sample completed pre-tests. Analyzing the pilot study's results helped determine the instrument's validity in the research. The variables obtained matched those in the conceptual framework by guaranteeing construct validity. Applying the internal consistency technique demonstrated the procedure's evaluation of the precise qualities. It was anticipated that the individual coefficient, composite coefficient, and Cronbach alpha threshold values would not surpass 0.5, 0.7, and 0.8 in that order.

The National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) had to be contacted to obtain a consent letter before the research could commence. The researcher also needed permission from each university for the participants to participate in the study. The goal was to ensure that no one was forced to participate in the research and that they all had agency. Therefore, each participant had to sign a consent form confirming their intention to participate in the study. To protect the privacy of these people, all information pertaining to the description and specifics of the participants was left anonymous. Above necessary, the researcher made it apparent that participants chose to engage in the study voluntarily and that their decision to stop was their own.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Response Rate

This group of respondents yielded an impressive 80% response rate for the researcher. This indicated that out of the 338 samples chosen, 270 people in total, the two randomly picked groups demonstrated interest in participating in the study, which resulted in an impressive 100% turnout rate.

3.2 Descriptive Results

The results of this study demonstrated the importance of librarians in knowledge management systems at Nairobi County's university libraries in response to this query. These individuals work in knowledge organizing, sharing, collaboration, and technological integration training for information-spreading users. Librarians in Nairobi County's university libraries are crucial to knowledge management because they build collections, implement classification schemes, improve accessibility to information resources, and train users to be effectively information literate. The study finds that professional librarians' roles in IT, knowledge sharing, communication, and innovation improve knowledge management (KM). KM advances effective user service delivery through knowledge innovation. The responses obtained made it clear how much librarians help students in need. These individuals ensured that all reading materials and digital libraries were available to scholars and researchers. Librarians assisted students equally when organizing and caring for a collection of books, journals, digital resources, and other information products. Librarians collect data from several sources, record it, store it, organize it, and distribute it on multiple platforms. The findings on the function of librarians in Nairobi County university libraries regarding knowledge organization and management are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Librarian's Role in Organizing and Managing Knowledge

Statements on Librarian's Role in Organizing and Managing Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage	VSE	SE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	SD
Knowledge Organization, Knowledge Sharing, and Collaboration, Technology Integration	338	100%			38 (10.5%)	173 (55.5%)	127 (34%)	4.04	0.50
Training the users	338	100%	30 (9.3%)		30 (9.3%)	125 (36.53%)	153 (44.86%)	4.32	0.79
Curating collections, implementing classification systems, facilitating access to information resources, and promoting adequate information literacy among users.	338	100%	30 (9.3%)		57 (17.7%)	100 (20.1%)	155 (44.9%)	4.76	0.900

The responses from 155 (44.9%) participants in the survey, which was based on the data collected, demonstrated the significance of universities providing thorough training and support to improve the service-delivery capacities of library staff. This includes spreading knowledge, providing help with technology, and conducting efficient instruction. In university libraries, 100 students (20.1%) felt that librarians are responsible for organizing and managing knowledge. One respondent stated, "*Curation of collections, implementation of classification systems, access to information resources, and promotion of effective information literacy among users are some of the pivotal ways librarians in Nairobi County's university libraries play a pivotal role in organizing knowledge management*." This declaration demonstrates that librarians know their responsibility for managing and organizing library knowledge. Librarians possess the ability to curate and organize academic resources and arrange information, according to Chemulwo and Sirorei (2020). These ensure that librarians are the best people to manage and arrange knowledge in university libraries. Furthermore, 125 (36.53%) respondents said that teaching library staff members the importance of complete competency should be one of the top goals. The results of this study validated the conclusions drawn by Migdadi (2020), which guide the creation of training and assistance initiatives aimed at enhancing library

employees' technological proficiency and knowledge management. Based on exposure and experience, the study demonstrates how library staff competency fluctuates, highlighting the necessity of continuous training and assistance. The university administration can use these insights to create effective training initiatives. Future studies should use bigger and more diverse sample sizes to enhance generalizability and transferability.

3.3 Discussion

The findings demonstrated the importance of librarians to knowledge management systems in university libraries in Nairobi County. These people work on projects that include coordination, exchange, cooperation, and instruction on technology integration for users who support knowledge dissemination. By creating classification schemes, enhancing user access to information resources, encouraging effective information literacy, and curating collections, librarians in Nairobi County's university libraries play a critical role in the administration of knowledge management. The findings concurred with the research of Koloniari and Fassoulis (2020), which states that knowledge management (KM) is supported by professional librarians' roles in IT, knowledge exchange, communication, and innovation. KM uses knowledge innovation to improve the delivery of efficient user services. The results revealed just how much librarians assist underprivileged pupils. These people ensured that researchers and academics had access to all reading materials and digital libraries. When collecting and maintaining a collection of books, journals, digital resources, and other information products, librarians provide equal assistance to students (Masinde et al., 2021. Librarians gather information from many sources, document, archive, arrange, and make it available across various media.

4.0 Conclusion

Based on the evidence gathered, there was a consensus that the competency level of library staff at university libraries was favorably correlated with knowledge management. These findings demonstrated how librarians' competency and proficiency levels impacted the knowledge management procedures at a university library. However, these individuals attested to a positive correlation between the staff's competency level and the university library's knowledge management efficiency. These people also recognized the advancements in knowledge management approaches brought about by technology. The results demonstrated that university libraries perform better than other establishments in terms of knowledge management tactics aided by technology. Subsequently, these colleges' use of technology may enhance this. Even with these readily available tools, academic institutions must prioritize good knowledge management in their policies.

5.0 Recommendations

The study recommended that county schools develop specific policies, promote collaboration with cultural organizations, and instruct librarians on evaluating their role in preserving cultural assets in university libraries. Knowing what libraries require and how they fit into the information exchange process can help promote tangible cultural assets more effectively in university settings. It was also recommended that for university libraries to have an exceptional culture, students must actively participate in identifying their needs. Additionally, these colleges must provide librarians with the resources to simplify and improve service delivery. This implies that these librarians will be engaged in cultural preservation during an annual cultural week.

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