



GLOBAL ECONOMIC RECESSION AND LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN INFORMATION AGE: A CASE OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This is a recent empirical view of effect of economic recession in libraries in Nigeria. Survey research was adopted for the study. All eight (8) governments owned universities in the south-south geographical zone were the population for the study. A representative sample of four (4) universities was chosen for the study using random sampling technique. Questionnaire constructed using the five (5) point likert scale was used for data collection and 74 number librarians from the sampled institution made up the respondents group. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that response rate was fair as only 48(64.86%) of the collection tool sent out was returned and useful. Data analyzed however confirmed that economic recession affects the growth and development of Nigerian university libraries and (35.41%) were of the opinion that present state of libraries in Nigeria undermines the caliber of Nigerian university graduates etc. However, the survey revealed that solutions such as commercializing library services, increase in government spending on education etc, will be a way forward for libraries.

Keywords: *Global Economic Recession and Library Development, University Libraries.*

Introduction

The spate of economic recession otherwise known as economic meltdown that has affected the economic and social world also afflicted all manner of organization of which the library is one. Economic recession is used to connote a difficult time for the economy of a country when there is lesser trade and industrial activities than usual, and were people are unemployed Hornby (2000).

Though, scholars have averred that recession has both its positive and negative tendencies in various states, its known positive benefit to any economy of the world is that it helps cure the affliction of inflation.

Michelle (2009) commenting the impact of recession on libraries stated that "Libraries are indeed seeing increases in use and requests for assistance and librarians are feeling the squeeze themselves". This means that making information available in right format and at the right time which should be a prerogative of libraries and librarians at this Information age could be hindered by global economic recession. "Information Age" connotes an era that has witnessed the convergence and synergizing of varying forms / kinds of information resources coupled with the manufacturing of multiple novel technologies to access these information sources.

Wikipedia free encyclopedia (2009) asserts that the “current age is characterized by the ability of individuals to transfer information freely and at same time have instant access to information that would have been previously difficult or impossible to find”. Thus, information age involves the use of novel technologies known as Information and communication Technologies (ICTs) in libraries such as; cell phones, digital music, high definition television, digital cameras, the internet computer games and some other relatively new products and services that have come handy and sporadically used especially in information related activities.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are series of individual technologies joined together by means of cables or optical fiber web materials used by libraries and other information centers for information handling and transfer. The dire effect of economic recession on libraries in developing countries in this information age actually needed an adequate re-examination. This is as the library being a center for information handling and use cannot be ignored as its position in providing relevant and timely information will alleviate the effect of economic recession on the state. In line with this, Obaseki (2007) stated that the library is an avenue for promoting literacy and expunging illiteracy. Thus, libraries stand out as mediums for eradicating the ignorance of persons to presence and means of dealing with economic recession by providing up to date and relevant information resources.

However, ability of libraries to meet this task doubtful as they are challenged by the information explosion syndrome, a resultant effect of information age or globalization. This has caused inabilities of libraries to easily select and acquire information resources that are needed for the educational development of their host communities. This is as the libraries are hindered by problems such as lack of funds, relevant technologies (internet, intranet), adequate professional staffs, e.t.c. which when available will enhance the libraries effectiveness in meeting challenges posed by such an era.

Hence, Daniel (2002) asserted that Establishing virtual libraries for higher education in Nigeria as a panacea for poor state of academic libraries cannot come at a better time than this; given the globalization of information... This implies that the use of ICTs in libraries will result in the increase in the efficacy and efficiency of the services rendered in libraries. This will actually go a long way in repositioning (information wise) the teeming population in developing states on nascent happenings either politically, economically etc. This is so given the spate of all round globalization that comes with the information age. In addition Wiki (2009) asserts that “Globalization is international integration; a process were the people of the world are unified into a simple society and functioning together”. The process is a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural and political force. Also Obilade (2003) in Akanni (2008) defines Globalization as the transformation of a domestic matter to a matter of international concern or regulation.

Statement of Problem

Universities education in Nigeria supposedly is the bedrock of the state economic, political, technological, social and cultural development. It is meant to reposition the state for glory in this era. Hence university education is observed to be on a decline. This is occasioned by problems such as inadequate funding, low level of research activities,

incessant strike actions, failing facilities and structures etc. Obi and Agbu (2001) lamented that gross under funding of the educational sector by the Nigerian government has been a major cause of most strike that the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASSU) have embarked upon. This tendency has obstructed the flow in educational system and quality of research being produced as witnessed in other states in the world.

Furthermore the decay in infrastructures obtainable in Nigerian universities is lamentable and at same time questionable, this as the some of the facilities especially the libraries found in most of this universities are hardly better than community libraries, Obi and Agbu (2001) and Obikoya (2001) in Babajide (2007). The above demonstrates the extent decay in libraries. It is alarming that at an information era as this; universities in a well economically and intellectually endowed state such as Nigeria could still be lacking well established libraries. It is observed that the university community finds it difficult to get access to quality information needed for their research easily. Babajide (2007) stated that “lacks of technological infrastructures, conducive environment are factors affecting research in Nigerian universities”.

The trend of economic recession has affected the economy state of the world which has led to the reduction in education spending in some states. Michelle (2009) reporting a survey finding on libraries and economic recession stated that “Libraries are indeed seeing increases in use and requests for assistance and librarians are feeling the squeeze themselves”. Economic recession has precipitated the challenge of inadequate funding which before now has been a perennial problem in university libraries. In the same vein, Akanni (2008) stated that “Nigerian libraries are challenged in the provision of virtual library service, ownership/licensing and cost, acquisition of new skills and electricity”. Thus they find it difficult in conforming to global standards. This study is however bent on investigating the effect of the economic meltdown on Nigerian university libraries.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to:

- Determine if the economic recession affects the growth and development of Nigerian university libraries,
- Ascertain the extent at which economic recession affects the development of university libraries,
- Find out if the present state of university libraries is have effect on the caliber of university graduates and quality of research findings from Nigerian universities,
- Make public if the competence of university graduates and quality of research findings from Nigerian universities is affected by the global economic recession, and
- Offer solutions on how university libraries can overcome difficulties in rendering information service without the hindrance of economic recession.

Research Method

Adopted for this study is survey research design with emphasis on the use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data were generated through the administration of 74 number of personally structured questionnaire which were validated using face validity by tested seasoned researchers. The secondary data were obtained from relevant literature and journals.

The target population for the study comprises all eight Federal and state owned University libraries in South-south geopolitical zone (Jamb Brochure: 2008). As shown in Table 1, below

Table 1
Population for the Study

S.No.	Names of university	Location
1	University of Benin	Benin City, Edo State
2	University of Port Harcourt	Choba, River state
3	Niger-Delta University	Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa
4	University of Calabar	Calabar
5	Cross River state University of Technology	Ekpo-Abasi, Calabar
6	Delta state University	Abraka, Delta state
7	Ambrose Alli University	Ekpoma, Edo state
8	Akwa Ibom state University of science and technology,	Akwa Ibom

The population for the study was limited to four (4) universities using the simple random sampling technique, these include:-

- Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma
- Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa.
- Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State and
- University of Benin, Benin-City, Edo-State

The subjects for the study are the librarians. These are persons with Bachelor degree (BLS) in librarianship and above working in these libraries, they are 74. They were seen suitable to be respondents for the study as they are professional librarians. furthermore, descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze data generated.

Data Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

Data collected were analyzed in line with the stated sections of the questionnaire. These were arranged in tabular form However, questionnaires were sent and only 48 (64.86%) were returned and found useful.

Table 2
Relationship between Economic Recession and University Library Development

S. No	Question Items	Responses				
		SD	D	U	SA	A
1.	Your Library has all it takes to confirm to the needs of your patrons in this 21st century?	7 (14.58)	11(22.92%)	4(8.33%)	8(16.67%)	18(37.5%)
2.	In your opinion your library is functioning adequately in meeting the needs of its patrons because it is properly equipped with ICTs and personnel's.	8(16.67%)	8(16.67%)	3(6.35%)	5(10.41%)	24(50%)
3.	It is a blessing that the funding needs of your library are adequately met by the government?	9(18.75%)	14(29.16%)	5(10.41%)	8(16.67%)	12(12.5%)
4.	Global economic recession has led and the increase and quick disbursement of funds to your library?	14(29.16)	9(18.75%)	9(18.75%)	7(14.58%)	9(18.75)
5.	Your library development is therefore not affected by economic recession?	13(27.08)	11(22.91%)	4(8.33)	7(14.58)	13(27.08)
6.	In your opinion your library inability to acquire new technologies and recruit staffs is hindwork of economic recession	16(33.33%)	6(12.5)	3(6.25)	11(22.91)	22(45.83)
7.	Thank God your library is well developed	5(10.41)	14(29.16%)	5(10.41%)	12(25)	12(25)
8.	The present state of development in your library is distributed to economic recession.	5(10.41%)	9(18.75%)	6(12.5)	15(31.25%)	13(27.08%)

X Mean: $\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N} = \frac{136}{12}$

The Table 2 revealed that the majority (37.5%) of the respondents agreed that the library has all it takes to meet patron's needs. While another majority (50%) were of the opinion that the library is adequately functioning in meeting patrons needs because it is equipped with ICTs and personnel's. These responses could be viewed as an egoistic and personal view of the respondents. Who even with little or no facilities promotes their professional ethics? This statement was justified when majority 29.16% of the respondents disagreed with the statement it is a blessing that library funding needs are met by the government. In addition, majority (19.16) respondents strongly disagreed that economic recession has led to the quick disbursement of funds to libraries. These responses means that economic recession (meltdown) has negatively affected library growth and development as there exist impediments to accessing funds meant for library.

Responses to question item number (5) showed majority (27.08%) and (22.92\1%) disagree with the statement your library development is therefore not affected by economic recession. This means, they are of the opinion that economic recession has affected library development. Hence it has not increased nor led to the quick disbursement of funds as earlier revealed.

Furthermore, (45.83%) of respondents agreed that library inability to acquire new technologies and recruits staffs is attributed to effect of economic recession. However, attempt was made to judge the extent of satisfaction of respondents with the state of development with the question "Thank God your library, is well developed" majority (29.11%) respondents disagreed with the phrase, indicating that there is nothing appealing in these libraries understudy. However, that economic recession is responsible for this response above was finally buttressed when majority (31.25%) agreed that the present state of development in library is attributed to economic recession.

Table 3
Current State of University Libraries, the Caliber of Graduates and Quality of Research Findings

S. No.	Question Items	Responses				
		SD	D	U	SA	A
1.	User's rate of patronage is very high ever with the state of facilities?	4(8.33%)	9(18.75%)	3(6.25%)	9(18.75)	23(47.91)
2.	Your library conveniently meets and satisfies the research and academic information needs of the university even with the state of infrastructure.	6(12.5)	8(16.67)	5(10.41)	10(20.83)	19(39.58)
3.	A well equipped university library will contribute to the quality of research funding and the caliber of graduates	-	-	-	27(56.25)	21(43.75%)
4.	Caliber of graduates from universities is influenced in the by the facilities in the university library in procession of information resources	3(6.25)	5(10.41)	5(10.41)	23(47.91)	15(31.25)
5.	It does matter the state of facilities present in the library for research work to be of high standard.	11(22.91)	9(18.75)	4(8.33)	13(27.08)	11(23.91)

$$\text{Mean: } X = \frac{\sum(X)}{N} = 109.6$$

Table 3 showed that majority (47.91%) of respondents agreeing that users patronage of libraries is still high irrespective of the available state of facility, Furthermore, the respondents majority (19.58) agreed that their library conveniently meets and satisfies the research and academic information needs of the university even with the state of infrastructure. These findings correlate with an earlier finding in table 1 (item no.2) that the library is functioning adequately. Hence it could be deduced that with the available infrastructure, the respondents were able to render services to their patrons. Who were satisfied with what was rendered. However, responses to (item no. 3), revealed that majority (56.25%) of the respondents strongly agreed that a well equipped library will contribute to the quality of research findings and caliber of graduates, in addition majority (47.91%) of the respondents strongly agreed that caliber of graduates from universities is influenced by the facilities in the library. This response justifies the view that the current state of university libraries understudy is at a mere manageable situation, since with more adequate equipping, the library will contribute to quality of research findings and caliber of graduates. Hence the university graduates productivity (input into society) is influenced by facilities in the libraries. This fact is truism as it has been observed of selected graduate who could not access information in any database.

Table 4
Quality Research Finding. Caliber of University Graduates and Economic Research

S. No	Question Items	Responses				
		SD	D	U	SA	A
1.	University libraries and better funded at this era of economic meltdown.	16(33.33)	10(20.83)	7(14.58)	4(8.33)	11(22.91)
2.	This era of economic recession contributes positively to researches?	9(18.75)	18(37.5)	7(14.58)	5(10.41)	9(18.75)
3.	Research findings are not affected by economic recession.	12(25%)	19(39.58)	4(8.33)	3(6.25)	10(20.83)
4.	Graduates from Nigerian of Universities at the era of economic recession given its effect on libraries are intellectually sound and better.	11(22.92)	17(35.41)	8(16.67)	4(8.33)	8(16.67)
5.	Yes/Economic recession positively enhances the intellects of university graduates	14(29.16)	15(31.25)	4(8.33)	5(10.41)	10(20.33)

$$\text{Mean: } \bar{X} = \frac{\sum(X)}{N} = 161.2$$

The above table showed that relationship does exist between quality research findings, caliber of university graduates and Economic Recession. This was as majority (33.33%)

of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that university libraries are better funded at this era of economic meltdown. In addition, majority (37.5%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the era of economic recession contributes positively to research. Furthermore, majority (39.58%) of the respondents disagreed also with the statement that research findings are not affected by economic recession. These responses justifies the view that quality of research findings are affected by economic recession. This however is made possible through inadequacies of inadequate funding, inadequate information and communication facilities cum resources in university libraries for the training, educating and informing of patrons who are mainly students and researchers undergoing researches.

Interestingly, that economic recession impacts negatively on the caliber of graduates from university was justified, as majority (35.41%) of respondents disagreed with the statement that graduates from Nigerian universities at the era of economic recession given its effects on libraries are intellectually sound and better. In addition, majority (31.25%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement Yes! Economic recession positively enhances the intellects of university graduates. These findings showed that, this era is witnessing the influx of Nigerian University graduates into the society whose educational capabilities are questionable. This is adjudged by their level of disposition and commitment to their assigned duties coupled with their level of productivity.

Table 5
Solutions to Economic Recession Effect on University Libraries?

S. No	Question Items	Responses				
		SD	D	U	SA	A
1.	Universities vis-à-vis libraries should commercialized it's services and functions to outside public	8(16.67)	8(16.67)	7(14.58)	10(20.83)	15(31.25)
2.	Reduction of tuition fees and finding of research by Government is a solution to economic recession	3(6.25)	10(20.83)	3(6.25)	9(18.75)	23(47.91)

$$\text{Mean: } X = \frac{\sum(X)}{N} = 118.5$$

Table 5 revealed that the practical solutions to stem the effect of economic recession on university libraries. Interestingly, majority (31.25%) of the respondents were in agreement that university vis-vis libraries should commercialize its services and functions to the public; furthermore majority (47.91%) agreed that reduction of tuition fees and funding of research by government are solutions to economic recession.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the data analyzed and with regards to the objectives of the study. The following findings were revealed that

1. Economic recession (Global meltdown) affects the growth and development of Nigeria University libraries. This is so given the responses from respondents. This is however conforms with the observable scenario in some university libraries in Nigeria, that still exist partially on make shift buildings, inadequate facilities and uninhabitable buildings. This is so as the effect of economic recession have left university libraries in Nigeria to be underdeveloped in this information age , when compared to their sister libraries in the Diaspora;
2. The present state of underdevelopment witnessed in university libraries affects the caliber of university graduates. This finding was informed by respondent's response to (item no.4) in table 3.
3. Nigerian university graduates level of productivity on the job and off the job is endangered by the effect of economic recession on university libraries.
4. Research findings from Nigeria are affected by economic recession.
5. University libraries should commercialize their services to the general public using marketing techniques and strategies.
6. Increase in funding for research conducted by government and other established agencies.

Conclusion

Achieving millennium development (MDG) goal is fundamental to all states of the universe, and the library cannot be a spectator in the actualization of these goals, since the library has in stock the main requisite ingredients (Information) that will ensure easy actualization of the set goals. The role of the library is not debatable, as presently the role of the library has tripled i.e., they not only process information sources and provide services as is widely known; libraries now teach. The library could not afford to fail at this junction, meaning that all stakeholders (Librarians, Library Management, University Authority etc) should initiate action programmes that should promote and place the interest and use of libraries high. This will ensure that caliber of university graduates and quality of research findings will be of appreciable standards thus paving way for MDG actualisation.

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