

Library and Information System and Services Provision, Access and Utilisation in Times of Insecurity

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Abstract

The paper conceived the concept of security as the state of being free all sorts of discomfort, anxiety, harassment, risks and other negatively disruptive tendencies. Challenges to security in the provision, access and utilisation of libraries and information centres' resources and services have been highlighted and the ways forward proposed. It concluded that, in the contemporary information provision and services delivery scene, library and information systems and services delivery has systematically transited from paper based information resources and services delivery to electronic/digital or a combination of both paper and electronic/digital based information resources and services delivery. Hence, library and information resources and services are accessed and utilised not only on face-to-face regime, but also remotely regardless of the time of access and location of the customer/client. It is thus essential to device all means and efforts to curtail hitches associated with insecurity of information systems and services delivery in libraries and information centres. Issue of security of library and information system and service delivery, access and utilisation as well as the external and internal security of nation should be the concern of everyone far and near.

Introduction

The concept 'security' is a phenomenon that is viewed differently from different perspectives and circumstances. By and large, it is a state of being free from all forms and types of discomfort, disharmony, harassment, distortion, threat, disequilibrium, disorder, uneasiness and nervousness, anxiety and risk, and other negatively disruptive tendencies of any sort within and outside an environment and/or area(s) of operation and existence. Ayoun, Boatbil & Banbil (2014) are of the view that insecurity is a global phenomenon and major problem in the contemporary society. To this extent, security can be contextualised within the scope of external and internal security. Security of any type and level is needed for overall societal and national development and advancement in all aspects and dimensions of human life. This is needed to facilitate effective provision, delivery, access and utilisation of both print and electronic/digital

library and information systems and service for all whenever and anywhere, be it face-to-face and/or remotely. Libraries and information centres, regardless of which type, are to serve as veritable sources of credible information and knowledge for generation and promotion of ideas and awareness; evolving and encouraging innovation and creativity; engaging in partnership, cooperation and collaboration; and to facilitate sustained development and advancement of individuals, community, society and the nation at large. Thus, libraries' and information centres' resources and services have to be inclusive and equitable, characterised by quality information resources and services capable of promoting life-long acquisition of and access to information, knowledge and ideas by all and sundry relevant for holistic sustained national development and advancement in all sectors of economy. In effect, security and safety of life and properties are strategically needed for effective access and utilisation of libraries' and information centres' resources and services whenever, wherever and by whosoever for whatever purpose.

The Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria in Perspective

The general security threats to individuals, communities, societies and nation; and indeed by extension to library and information centre systems and resources access, utilisation and services can by and large be associated to:

- **Environmental Challenges** mostly associated with soil degradation and erosion; air pollution; flood; erosion, climate change; global warming; etc which make the inhabitants unsafe to live and be involved in any meaningful socio-economic and political activities for societal development and advancement. It can also be said that the existence and longevity of library and information buildings and structures sited in such terrains could eventually be affected at the long run (Ndukwe, Folarami, Eze, :2021).
- **Socio-Political and Cultural Challenges** as a result of differences in culture, ethnicity, religion, ideology and politics. Due to intolerance, individuals, communities and societies could be raided and dealt with by warmongers, thugs, not easily identified gunmen and women, masquerades and so on leading to ethnic cleansing, inter-tribal, inter-political and inter-religious crisis and wars where everyone tries to escape for their dear life and properties. By inclusion, library and information centre resources and services provision and patronage is on drastic decline (Owuamanam, Adeyemi:2021).
- **Food and Shelter Challenges** where, due to the effect of global warming and soil degradation, farming efforts yield no encouraging output as there is food scarcity and quality for average people; and cost of basic accommodation especially in urban and semi-urban settlements is on the increase; average individuals, communities and societies are systematically into hunger and famine without basic food and shelter to survive. By implication, library and information resources and services provision and utilisation is at tertiary rather than primary or secondary level (samatu,2021) .
- **Healthcare Challenges** where, especially people in the hinterlands, lack basic health delivery services as location and access to hospitals and dispensaries are not within

reach. Available drugs are mostly not genuine but costly. Hence, due to unhealthy paradigm, human productivity in any circumstance is low for value addition. Thus, whosoever with poor health challenge might rarely consider library and information service provision, access and utilisation a priority.

- **Human and Material Safety Challenges** where everyone feels unsecured and unsafe to do anything meaningful and live peaceful due to varieties of social upheavals brought about by thugry, banditry, kidnapping, terrorism, criminality, thievery, criminality, child labour, domestic and occupational violence, physical violence, violent demonstrations/rallies, brigandage, fire incidences/arson, informants and other forms of anti-social tendencies/acts to deliberately inflict physical harm on whosoever, whenever, wherever and for whatever. In effect therefore, effective library and information access and utilisation especially in the evenings would be hazardous (Rufai, Mac-LEVA Fidelis, Akote, Madugba, Media, Inagwelu, :2021).
- **Economic Instability Challenges.** This tends to scarcity of genuine and durable goods/products; rising inflation rates; rising costs of living; dwindling national currency value over foreign ones; avalanche of fake goods including educational and laboratory equipment/facilities; high cost of especially foreign information resources and facilities; high costs of printing, publishing and advertising; increasing costs of printing materials; unemployment; underemployment ; over employment; and rising profile of poverty and human degrading of especially people in the hinterlands; etc. The concomitant effect of unfavourable economic climate on library and information resources and services provision for effective utilisation can be felt on inability to provide functional systems with updated and relevant collections and services. This also presupposes that ability to acquire collections for basic, applied and development research as at when needed in educational and scientific centre will be highly impossible.
- **Technology Application and Adaption Challenges.** Generally, technology (whether automated, mechanical, manual, visual, audio or audio-visual), can be conceived as whatever equipment/facility being utilised to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in performance at least effort. Good as technologies are, the negative effects of technology applications and adaption such as the Internet and other cloud technologies include deliberate engagements in nefarious activities such as impersonation, deceit, cheating, faking, swindling, scamming, cyber terrorism/criminality, counterfeiting of websites, pharming and phishing, cloning, thievery, bunkering, misinformation, misdirection, collusions, abetting and other types and forms of crimes and disorders. In effect, online library and information systems and services provision and possibility of having acceptable mode of access and utilisation could be jeopardised so long as no strategic measures are not put in place to checkmate the delinquent customers (Adaramola,(2021), Hedayit,(2012) & Symantic, (2016).

The External and Internal Security

The external security can be said to be the security of a nation's territorial boundaries and integrity which by design is defended by deliberate collaborative efforts of military and parasecurity agencies. Expectedly, a nation should have the capacity and ability to control its foreign and domestic paradigms and affairs for the citizenry to effortlessly enjoy self-determination, enhanced information access and utilisation, improved wellbeing, satisfactory autonomy and prosperities at all times unhindered. This can be achieved through effective and efficient management of the economy, manpower and other factors of production to reduce wastages and redundancies; effective and strategic diplomacy and counterintelligence to facilitate mutual cooperation and collaboration between and among friendly nations; effective and efficient armed forces and parasecurity agencies; effective and efficient management of critical infrastructure; have emergency preparedness for the unexpected (such as terrorism, kidnapping and banditry, armed robbery, violent demonstrations/rallies, etc); and effective and efficient provision, management, access and utilisation of intelligence services and classified information. In effect therefore, what is ultimately necessary and needed for library and information systems and services delivery, access and utilisation to impact positively on a community, society and a nation in general, will largely depend upon the availability and provision of political security, environmental security, economic security, cyber security, military and paramilitary security as well as indeed social and cultural security.

On the other hand, internal security tends to centre more on the life and properties of individuals as well as the internal integrity of communities, societies and a nation at large. It usually focuses on human freedom and fulfillment associated with the effect of direct and indirect structural violence leading to eventual societal and national sustained underdevelopment due to apparent presence of threats and lawlessness, discrimination, injustice, violation of rights of the citizenry and prevention of adequate access to basic education and literacy, health care, shelter, food, information and awareness, as well as other social welfare and societal needs and wants. This suggests that life security should be perceived within the dimensions of human safety from unsecured economy, social welfare, health, food, shelter, environment, socio-political and cultural predispositions in line with the expectations of the 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)' of the United Nations Organisation (UNO). This is better achieved through deliberate basic protection and empowerment of all and sundry in a society and nation. There should be coordinated and integrated people-oriented approach to advance and promote peace and stability as well as advancement in all sectors of society and economy. By all means, protection and empowerment strategies are needed to improve the capacities of the powers-that-be to protect whosoever from foreseen and unforeseen threats as well as enhance the capacities and resilience of everyone to cope with identified and imagined threats from wherever, whenever and for whatever purpose. This type of regime/ state of affairs is necessary for effective provision, access and utilisation of library and information systems and services needed for education, training, researching, implementations and enlightenments to ensure effective

participation in the overall development and advancement of individuals and society in all aspects. Ideally, internal security is usually better managed by deliberate cooperative and collaborative efforts, determination and resilience of non military law enforcement agents and cohorts.

In Nigeria, there are the military and paramilitary establishments/intuitions such as the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Immigrations Service, Nigerian Customs Service and National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to manage the external security. The internal security should not be considered as state-centric passé. Rather, in the contemporary formation, it should be conceived within the context of the safety of life and properties of individuals, communities and societies. This presupposes that internal security provision and access should be inter-disciplinary and inter-connected to allow for comprehensiveness while taking note of the need to be multi-sectoral; prevention and attack-oriented; citizenry-centred; context-specific; and information-based. More often than not, the internal security is usually being managed by the Nigerian Police Force (sometimes including the army personnel) and other security agency outfits such as the Nigerian Civil Defense Corps, State Security Service, Department of State Security, National Intelligence Agency, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Nigerian Correctional Service, the State Police, the internal/private arranged Institutional/Organisations Security Service outfits as well as the Local and Community Vigilante Groups and/or Civilian Joint Task Forces, etc.

Within the perspectives of internal security, sadly, it is already a familiar news from foreign and national/local news media announcing the concomitant effects of sporadic attacks of terrorists, bandits, kidnapers, drug addicts, thieves, armed robbers, swindlers, cyber terrorists/charlatans and others involved in notorious anti-social/cultural activities on our communities (Nwanko, Nduka, Madugba, Media Trust, Sani, Ezeh, The Sun Publishing & Omiri in :2021). These have led to the effect that:

- ❖ traders cannot freely go to markets and farmers also cannot go to their farms nor collect their harvest without paying some royalties to the charlatans. This has concomitant effect on ability of the populace to effectively patronise library and information systems and services provided for their utility;
- ❖ students (including those in military institutions) are being harassed and high-jacked or kidnapped for ransoms (Rufai, :2021). In effect, library systems and services patronage will be closed or decline minimally especially in the evening hours;
- ❖ a lot of schools in the North West, North Central and North East states of Nigeria where it is biting harder have to go on forced vacation at one point or the other and also library and information systems and services provision and utilisation are negatively affected. In some instances, wards are withdrawn by their parents in fear of attacks and informants;
- ❖ a lot of the youth, some of who eventually turned into illicit trades such as cyber crime, drugging, kidnapping and banditry to satisfy their desires (Marwa, Akor, :2021). In

such circumstance, library and information services patronage by the youth will be highly minimal;

- ❖ negativity of unfavourable economic climate and inflation tend to affect not only the average people in the land but, the capacity of libraries and information centres to effectively acquire updated and relevant information resources and also provide the state-of-art services; and
- ❖ systemic desert encroachments, flooding and gully erosion have made some communities constantly under varieties of threats as the concomitant by-products of global warming. This presupposed the need to tactically revisit the sitting of library and information structures there. At best, such areas will be better served by mobile library and information systems and online services.

Library and Information System and Services Insecurity in Nigeria

Essentially, libraries are to facilitate quality and reliable educational and informational delivery needed for problem-solving, creativity and innovation as well as support for and promotion of basic, applied and development researches to change a nation's overall development and advancement landscape. Optimally, libraries and information centres, particularly academic libraries and information centres, are also to serve as conduit for facilitating educational and research institute collaboration with industries to actualise creative and innovative products. Basically, the ultimate goal is to ensure sustained productivity and productiveness of all and sundry for societal and national development and advancement. Thus, within the precept of library and information systems and services provision, access and utilisation, lack of both the external and internal securities can greatly affect the essence of provision of such systems and services directly and indirectly especially within the context of systems and services initiation, proposal, establishment, expansion, demand, supply, access and utilisation of such systems and services by whosoever, whenever, wherever and for what purpose. In effect, it can be argued that the extent of effective and efficient provision, demand, access and utilisation of library and information systems and services is greatly a function of the extent of available external and internal securities of an individual and groups in a community, society, nation and region. In order to ensure effective societal and national sustainable development and indeed advancement in all dimensions, the individuals, communities, institutions/organisations, societies, nations and regions need to be strategically safe and protected from all sorts and forms of external and internal threats, disorders, discomforts, disharmonies, vandalisations, aggressions and insecurity for library and information services provision to effectively and efficiently flourish to facilitate meeting such expectations.

There is no doubt in the fact that library and information systems and services delivery are faced with varieties of insecurity due to the state of things especially when viewed within the frame of internal security. Some of the strategic security challenges/ risks include:

- **The Chief Executive/Head of Institution/Organisation** This is especially when the management of the institution/organisation treats library and information systems and services with levity. In addition to underfunding in budgetary allocation, there is also under understaffing of the libraries and information centres with quality specialist staff. Library and information systems and services provision, access and utilisation is not given the desired priority and expectation, especially as it relates to initiation, establishment, expansion as well as provision of adequate funds and other critical factors of production and services as at when due. A majority of educational institutions' libraries and information centres have to rely majorly on Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) to survive. Some educational institutions have to resort to faking library collections and services during the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and Professional accreditations. There is the issue of over reluctance to acquire cut-edge technologies for library operations and services as well as payments for acquisition/annual subscriptions of strategic data bases. Some tend to engage in financial scandals particularly, misappropriation of library and information systems and services funds by way of over invoicing and collusion with agents and suppliers to under supply whatever or supply substandard facilities, etc. Strategically necessary and vital attentions are needed to facilitate and ensure doing the right things whenever and wherever to meet up to the contemporary library and information systems and services expectations.
- **The Management of Library and Information Centre Systems and Services** is a security challenge when its tendencies are more of reactive rather than proactive to security issues. Attempts could also be made to collude with suppliers and agents in financial embarrassments such that strategic facilities are under supplied or substandard ones as supplied. Security issues have to be given top priority treatment especially as it relates to initiation, availability, prevention, installation, maintenance, cooperation and collaboration etc with strategic stakeholders on human and materials resources supplies and safety and security. This is needed for efficient availability and effective utilisation of funds for provision and management of human and material resources and facilities appropriately.
- **Library and information Centre Systems and Services Personnel.** The staff are considered security risks especially when their attitudes and behaviours, or rather their characteristics, are not in line with the precepts of the desired stability and progress in the organisation, institution, community, society and the nation in general. Some of the repugnant characteristics of staff include but not limited to: carelessness; lack of dedication to duties and responsibilities; laxity and non-performance at place of work; compromise, connivance and collusion with colleagues/other staff, patrons, facilitators, agents, providers and suppliers to deliberately cause some havoc and/or damages and vandalism to supplies, equipment, facilities, and other goods and services; misappropriation of funds; and extortion and embarrassment of clients. One wonders how

effective library and information services delivery, access and utilisation could survive the hurdles.

- **Library and Information Centre Customers/ Clients.** The library and information centre customers could be security risks especially when they exhibit some unacceptable tendencies such as: deliberate misuse of resources and services in form of theft, mutilation and hiding of resources; collusion and collaboration with unscrupulous personnel and colleagues to steal or unorthodoxly take away resources and facilities; cause deliberate damage of resources and facilities; connivance and/or evolvment of strategies to unlawfully exchange/replace standard resources and facilities with substandard ones; etc. Thus much critical attention has to be tactically provided to effectively handle the delinquent customers accordingly devoid of any form of physical embarrassment.
- **Library and Information Centre Equipment and Facilities.** The library and information centre equipments and facilities, especially electronic based, could be considered as security risks to the customers and indeed the personnel due to their inferiority. Inferior and substandard electronic equipments, fittings and other facilities when, in use constantly, could course lost of life and properties due to shocks, sparks and eventual fire outbreaks incidences. Similarly, inferior and substandard facilities such as shelves, lockers cupboards could give way due to overloads and manhandle. Library and information centre buildings, when poorly constructed, sited and fitted, could eventually give way and develop some cracks and other discomfoting terrains to the customers and resources. Carefulness need to be exercised the purchase and maintenance of library and information resources and facilities.
- **HostCommunity/Neighbourhood** Libraries and information centres sited in communities and neighbourhood could experience crisis of confidence, support and vandalism. Due to the state of their ignorance and political and cultural difference, there could rarely be any meaningful assistance and support from them during times of crisis such land encroachment, vandalisations, pilfering and arson on library and information properties and sites seen as alien edifice for their benefits.
- **Unfavourable Environmental Landscape.** The weather and climatic conditions of the location/site of library and information centre could cause some discomfort to customers, staff, resources and fittings especially in times of extreme heat, cold, rain, flood, dampness, wind and dust. Strategic carefulness is needed in the choice of sites as well as during building/erecting and installation of fittings of library and information centre. It is important that library buildings and fittings should be standardised, durable, acclamatiseable and accommodative to changes in weather and climate. Befitting, durable, standard and comfortable seats, stacks, ventilation and heating facilities/equipment should be provided for the comfort of customers, staff and security of resources.

Concluding Remarks

In the contemporary information provision and services delivery scene, library and information systems and services delivery has systematically transited from paper based information

resources and services delivery to electronic/digital or a combination of both paper and electronic/digital based information resources and services delivery. To this end, library and information resources and services are accessed and utilised not only on face-to-face regime, but also remotely regardless of the time of access and location of the customer/client. It is therefore essential to device all means and efforts to curtail hitches associated with insecurity of information systems and services delivery in libraries and information centres. The concern for the security of library and information systems and services should be for everyone far and near.

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