

Academic profile and career choice of fresh undergraduates of library and information science in a Nigerian University of Education

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The choice of a career is very essential in learner's academic endeavour. This study investigated the academic profile and career choice of fresh undergraduates of LIS (Library and Information Science) in a Nigerian University of Education. The study sought to find out the academic profile and the preferred course chosen by the undergraduates, as well as the perception of the undergraduates about LIS. A total of 120 newly admitted undergraduates in the Department of LIS, Tai Solarin University of Education, (TASUED) Nigeria were purposively chosen. Data was gathered using an instrument tagged Perception of New Entrants about LIS/Profession (PERNELIS). All questionnaires administered were returned and found useful for the study. The entry academic profile indicated that 113 (94.3%) and 109 (93.4%) of the undergraduates had at least a credit or more in the mandatory subjects i.e., English and mathematics. Also, the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) score revealed that most of the undergraduates had above 200 i.e. 88 (72.5%) over a total score of 400 while the Post-UTME results indicated that majority or 70 (58.3%) of the undergraduates had between 13-25 on an overall scale of 100. Furthermore, the study found out that undergraduates were influenced to study LIS based on their interest (55.0%) hence 40 (33.3%) and 55 (45.8%) undergraduates choose the course LIS as their first and second choices respectively. The study therefore recommends sustained and continuous awareness about LIS in order to ascertain that LIS schools are not dumping ground for low intelligent quotient (IQ) undergraduates.

Keywords: Career; Library and information science; undergraduates; Nigeria

Introduction

The choice of a career is a herculean task faced by many people and if this choice is not carefully made, it can either make or mar the future of an individual because there are many career paths to choose from. The choice of a career can therefore be influenced by various factors ranging from internal to external such as ignorance, gender, interest, parental/relative influence, advice from friends, school's influence (peer and curricular content), religion, child's upbringing, teacher's counsel, family values, prestige and societal perception accorded a particular profession, employability; an individual's characteristics, environment, salary etc^{1,2,3}.

Interestingly, some individuals are attracted to a career because of the mode of dressing of the individuals in that profession e.g. lawyers, physicians, accountants, pilots, and engineers etc⁴. Library and Information Science (LIS) is perhaps one of the disciplines that undergraduates may not have chosen as a career path because it is perceived as an 'unprofessional' discipline.

An individual is adjudged a professional because he/she has knowledge and skills in a particular discipline and to which the "commoner" or the unprofessional seek this knowledge. Librarians are professionals due to their knowledge and ability to bring order to a world of "information chaos". Technological advancement has therefore given the profession a lift such that a librarian is no longer confined only to the "four walls" of a library and neither has the place of the librarian been eroded by the internet. Rather this technological platform enhances a librarian's information role, such that the librarian of today doubles as a programmer, webmaster, digital curator, electronic librarian, internet searcher, database manager, etc.

In Nigeria, the National Universities Commission which is the regulatory body for higher education in Nigeria is perhaps contributing to the sudden recognition and societal acceptance of LIS in Nigeria. This might have been caused by the proliferation of institutions of higher learning and as part of its

accreditation policy, that institutions must have well-equipped libraries as well as professional librarians to support the teaching, learning and research activities in these institutions. Furthermore, other factors that may dictate a career path for today's youth in LIS are Senior School Certificate Examination(SSCE) result; predetermined cut-off point in Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination(UTME)conducted by the Joint Admission Matriculation Board(JAMB) and Post-UTME conducted by the chosen universities.

The choice of a career path in LIS may therefore not have stemmed from a natural interest of today's youth owing to it not being perceived as one of the conventional "professional disciplines" hence most undergraduates find themselves by accident rather than by design in the profession. Most undergraduates will rather choose professional disciplines like Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Accounting, Engineering, etc. and then have a rethink of change of course when they do not meet up to the required demands for admission.

As a result of the foregoing one then begins to wonder if LIS schools in Nigerian universities are "dumping grounds" for less academically intelligent undergraduates with less impressive academic entry profile? It is pertinent therefore to state that undergraduates in LIS departments are also admitted based on specified admission criteria used for their counterparts in the "professional" disciplines. They have to meet up with predetermined cut-off marks. All these and the subjects taken at secondary school constitute the entry profile of students. An undergraduate's entry profile into LIS is not restrictive rather it is a combination of different subjects hence the richness of the profession.

Tai Solarin University of Education(TASUED)where this research was conducted is the leading premier University of Education in Nigeria and the Department of Library and Information Science awards the Bachelor of Library and Information Science(BLIS(Ed)) based on laid-down criteria for admission into tertiary institutions in the country.

Statement of the problem

The career choice of today's undergraduate in LIS may have been influenced by both internal and external factors. The internal factors such as interest, passion, love of the career, etc. has greater motivating factor on the individual as it propels him/her to pursue a desired career without being influenced. However the choice to study LIS in

Nigerian Universities may have little to do with student's natural interest. There is a strong believe that majority of students admitted into LIS schools got there as a last resort because they were unable to secure admission into their preferred courses and that when compared to students admitted to those preferred courses, they are believed to possess lesser academic entry profile.

It is also assumed by the general populace that undergraduates in LIS are not as highly-rated academically as their counterparts in other professions hence this gives the picture of LIS departments as a "dumping ground" so to say. Furthermore, several studies in Nigeria have been conducted in relation to undergraduates career choices however very little or no research has been carried out with emphasis on newly admitted students and their entry academic profile in relation to their career choices, hence this study investigates the undergraduates' entry profile and career choice of library and information science in a Nigerian University of Education.

Literature review

In a related study on undergraduates' career choice in estate management, the findings revealed that the undergraduates were influenced by their interest and inability to meet up with the required cut-off points for the most preferred courses³. Similarly, occupation, societal status, etc. of parents plays significant and sometimes rigid role in the choice of a career of a child/children forgetting that every profession has its own benefit to the society at large. Hence some parents would rather prefer a child to follow their career path/preference⁵⁻⁹. In general, the choice of a career is influenced mainly by advice from parents, relatives, friends, teachers, and counsellors⁹. However, there seems to be no significant relationship between parental and peer group influence on career choice in humanities among secondary school students⁷.

In a related study on factors influencing the career choice of Urban Agricultural Education students, the findings showed that students' career choices were greatly influenced by their mother or female guardian, friend, and father or male guardian¹¹.

Furthermore, the choice of Dentistry as a career among undergraduates revealed that the influencing factors for the undergraduate's choice of Dentistry were parents/family members, interest, prestige, good job opportunity abroad, and regular work hours². In a related study, undergraduate's choice of Agricultural

Science, was influenced mainly by future career/job opportunity, personal interest, government/societal view towards agriculture⁹.

Interestingly, though an individual should have the necessary academic requirement for a course, the intrinsic interest also plays a major role in the pursuance of a career for the individual to succeed¹². Where intrinsic interest is lacking, no amount of training motivation or gratification would significantly increase the person's professional effectiveness. However, some people find themselves in a profession they never opted for not because of interest rather due to low UTME score or poor secondary school academic result.

Also, personal interest had significant influence on career choice, as more than 70% of the students who participated in a study were influenced by personal interest as well as availability of advancement opportunities and learning experiences when making career choices¹³. A study of undergraduates admitted in Secretarial Education found out that undergraduates may not have voluntarily chosen the course rather as a last resort hence the students do not have much self-worth and it is mostly assumed as a feminine profession¹². Undergraduates were also admitted to the Dental programme as a result of having the prescribed cut-off score stipulated by the Joint Admission Matriculation Board Examinations (JAMB). In a related study conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the findings revealed that many candidates join courses which are believed to hold the key to jobs and regarded by the society, as being prestigious and money making¹⁴.

On the choice of LIS, research findings revealed that most students admitted for the LIS programme had a subject background in Arts and Social Sciences and their first choice of courses was in LIS. Also, the study further emphasized that most undergraduates choose the course as a result of previous working experience in a library. However undergraduates were greatly influenced to choose the course as a result of factors such as UTME Brochure, parents and/or relations, heard about the course during the admission period on campus¹.

In a similar study on diploma student's choice of librarianship findings revealed that the student were influenced by prior knowledge in library work, opportunity to further their study, association with librarians, experience in library work, a liking for

books and the need for career change¹⁵. Also, the choice of a career path for high school students had been in the professional disciplines like medicine, law and accounting profession as against librarianship¹⁶. However the feminine gender dominates the LIS profession among the undergraduates and this could have been as a result of their acceptance of the course than their male counterparts¹⁷.

In a related study on career choice of LIS in South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria, the result showed that the most influencing factors was the job opportunity available for the course¹⁴. In a related study on the characteristics and choice of librarianship as a career among librarians in Ogun State, the findings revealed that the choice to study librarianship was as a result of previous working experience in the library and the major sources of information that influenced the choice of librarianship were friend and relatives¹⁸.

Objectives of the study

- To understand the academic profile of the undergraduates admitted to study LIS at TASUED;
- To know the factors influencing the choice of library and information science by the undergraduates;
- To find the preferred courses selected by undergraduates at the point of seeking for admission; and
- To find the perceptions of the undergraduates about Library and Information Science as a career.

Methodology

This study is a survey and was carried out using a purposively chosen 120 newly admitted undergraduates in 100 and 200 levels of the LIS department of TASUED, Nigeria. As at the time of the study the students were in their first semester of a four-year training programme. This target study participants was used because the researcher perceived that the students thoughts would not have been influenced by interaction with older colleagues/professionals, and formal training etc.

A questionnaire tagged Perception of New Entrants about LIS/Profession(PERNELIS)was administered directly on the students. All questionnaire administered were retrieved giving a total response rate of 100%. The reason was that the researcher administered the questionnaire immediately after a lecture.

Table 1—Demographic information

	Demographic Variables	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Level	100	62	51.7
	200	58	48.3
Gender	Male	53	44.2
	Female	67	55.8
Age(years)	Below 15	2	1.7
	16 - 20	58	48.3
	21-25	54	45
	26-30	6	5

Table 2—Academic profile of LIS Undergraduates

Subject	A1	B2	B3	C4	C5	C6	D7	E8	F9
English	5(4.2%)	12(10%)	11(9.2%)	23(19.2%)	24(20%)	38(31.7%)	1(0.8%)	1(0.8%)	----
Mathematics	8(6.7%)	8(6.7%)	19(15.8%)	17(14.2%)	28(23.3%)	32(26.7%)	----	3(2.5%)	----
Physics	1(0.8%)	2(1.7%)	5(4.2%)	1(0.8%)	1(0.8%)	4(3.3%)	2(1.7%)	2(1.7%)	----
Chemistry	1(0.8%)		1(0.8%)	4(3.3%)	2(1.7%)	3(2.5%)	4(3.3%)	----	----
Biology	2(1.7%)	4(3.3%)	10(8.3%)	22(18.3%)	21(17.5%)	27(22.5%)	7(5.8%)	4(3.3%)	4(3.3%)
Lit. in English	1(0.8%)	7(5.8%)	6(5%)	10(8.3%)	9(7.5%)	11(9.2%)	11(9.2%)	3(2.5%)	----
Economics	5(4.2%)	10(8.3%)	18(15%)	20(16.7%)	26(21.7%)	18(15%)	11(9.2%)	2(1.7%)	----
Geography	3(2.5%)	1(0.8%)	2(1.7%)	3(2.5%)	10(8.3%)	7(5.8%)	2(1.7%)	1(0.8%)	1(0.8%)
Government	6(5%)	8(6.7%)	7(5.8%)	7(5.8%)	9(7.5%)	6(5%)	1(0.8%)	----	1(0.8%)
Accounting	4(3.3%)	3(2.5%)	6(5%)	3(2.5%)	3(2.5%)	9(7.5%)	----	----	----
Commerce	6(5%)	5(4.2%)	12(10%)	8(6.7%)	15(12.5%)	7(5.8%)	----	----	----
CRS	1(0.8%)	1(0.8%)	5(4.2%)	1(0.8%)	1(0.8%)	1(0.8%)	----	----	1(0.8%)
Agriculture	----	1(0.8%)	2(1.7%)	3(2.5%)	2(1.7%)	3(2.5%)	1(0.8%)	1(0.8%)	----
Yoruba	1(0.8%)	1(0.8%)	7(5.8%)	5(4.2%)	4(3.3%)	9(7.5%)	2(1.7%)	2(1.7%)	1(0.8%)

Analysis

The demographic information in Table 1 revealed that majority of the students admitted to the Department of Library and Information Studies are between the ages 16-20 years and were mostly female. The gender variation of more female than male is expected because over the years the profession is somewhat accepted among the feminine gender. The age variation is reducing as well over the years hence the high incidence of young graduates in today's society.

Academic profile of LIS students

Result in Table 2 revealed that 108(90.1%) and 5(4.2%) of the undergraduates had at least a credit or more and a distinction in English language respectively. Also 104(86.7%) and 8(6.7%) of the undergraduates had at least a credit or more and a distinction respectively in mathematics. Result further showed that 84(69.9%) and 2(1.7%) of the undergraduates had a credit or more and distinction respectively in Biology. Similarly, 92(76.7%) and 5(4.2%) of the undergraduates had at a least a credit or more and distinction respectively in Economics. Result in Table 2 further revealed that 47(39.2%) and

6(5.0%) of the undergraduates had at least a credit or more and distinction respectively in commerce.

Result in Table 3 indicated that majority or 71(58.8%) of the undergraduates had UTME score of between 202-242 on an overall total of 400 and only two students had between 120-160 scores. Also most of the undergraduates or 70(58.3%) had a Post-UTME score of between 13-25 score on a total of 100.

Factors influencing the choice of LIS as a career

Result in Table 4 revealed that among the various factors that influenced undergraduate's choice of Library and Information studies (LIS) the most prevalent influencing factor was the undergraduates' interest (55.0%). It can be inferred that majority of the undergraduates chose to study LIS based on interest.

Choice of courses

Result in Table 5 revealed that out of the total 120 undergraduates sampled, 40(33.3%) actually choose LIS as first choice of course and about 55(45.8%) indicated interest for LIS as second choice. This choice could have been influenced by the undergraduate's interest.

Table 3—Distribution of respondents by UTME Score

UTME Score Over 400 Marks	Score	Frequency(N)	Percentage (%)
	120-160	2	1.6
	161-201	30	24.8
	202-242	71	58.8
	243-283	17	13.7
Post-UTME Score Over 100 Marks	1-12	22	18.3
	13-25	70	58.3
	26-38	6	5.0
	39-51	17	14.1
	52-64	5	4.1

Table 4—Factors influencing choice of LIS by Undergraduates

Influencing factors for the choice of LIS	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Interest in the course	66	55.0
Parents advice	19	15.8
Relatives advice	19	15.8
Friends advice	7	5.8
Cut-off for preferred course was higher than my score	29	24.2
Librarians	29	24.2
Advertisement	9	7.5
No other place to go	3	2.5
I was tired of staying at home	21	17.5
UTME brochure	29	24.2
I heard about the course on campus during the admission process	29	24.2
I was given the course to study	9	7.5

Perceptions of the undergraduates about LIS

Result in Table 6 revealed that the undergraduates had a strong and positive perception about all the criteria used in measuring perception. i.e. 119(99.1%) perceived LIS as a professional course and only 1(0.8%) agreed that LIS is not a professional course. Similarly about 97(65.8%) of the undergraduates supported that LIS is a lucrative course. Also 76(63.3%) of the undergraduates disagreed that they were only studying LIS by chance this is also reflected in the undergraduates interest. Interestingly, 86(71.6%) of the undergraduates disagreed that they would rather go for another degree after their first degree in LIS.

Discussions

A good number of the students were within the expected age range for undergraduates in Nigeria while majority of the respondents were mostly female and this could have resulted in the acceptance of LIS by the feminine gender. These gender variation corroborates¹⁷ the finding that the feminine gender dominates the LIS profession.

The academic entry profile revealed that most of the undergraduates had the necessary prerequisite qualification for admission i.e. at least Five (5) credits or more. The findings revealed that English language and Mathematics which are mandatory prerequisite subject, 113(94.3%) and 109(93.4%) of the undergraduates had at least a credit or more in the two subjects respectively. Similarly, in Economics 97(80.9%) and Biology 86(71.6%) a high percentage of the undergraduates also had at least a credit or more. Furthermore, a closer look at the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) score revealed that most student admitted had above 200 i.e. 88(72.5%) on a total of 400 while the Post-UTME result showed that majority or 70(58.3%) of the undergraduates had between 13-25 on a scale of 100. The implication of this finding is that students admitted to study LIS were no less academically unintelligent as compared with their counterparts in other departments since they had the necessary requirements for admission.

The career choice of undergraduates have been known to be influenced by many prevailing factors

Table 5—Choice of courses

	Courses	Frequency(N)	Percentage (%)
First Choice of Course	Economics	10	8.3
	Business Administration	10	8.3
	Education and Business Administration	2	1.7
	History and International Studies	1	0.8
	Food Science and Technology	1	0.8
	Library and Information Science	40	33.3
	Accounting	7	5.8
	Political Science	9	7.5
	English	3	2.5
	Educational Management	4	3.3
	Mass Communication	8	6.7
	Education and Political Science	1	0.8
	History and Diplomatic Studies	1	0.8
	Business Education	6	5.0
	Guidance and Counseling	3	2.5
	Computer Science	1	0.8
	Sociology	1	0.8
	Philosophy	2	1.7
	Law	1	0.8
	Geography and Environmental Management	1	0.8
	Human Kinetics	1	0.8
	Physical and Health Education	1	0.8
	Secretarial Administration	2	1.7
	Psychology	1	0.8
	Social Studies	1	0.8
	Industrial and Labour Relations	1	0.8
	Creative Art	1	0.8
	Economics	9	7.5
	Political Science	10	8.3
	Business Administration	10	8.3
	Education and Business Administration	1	0.8
	Library and Information Science	55	45.8
Accounting	3	2.5	
Statistics	1	0.8	
Education and Political Science	2	1.7	
English	3	2.5	
Educational Management	5	4.2	
Sociology	2	1.7	
Business Education	7	5.8	
Guidance and Counselling	3	2.5	
Mass Communication	6	5.0	
Social Work	1	0.8	
Banking and Finance	1	0.8	
Home-Economics and Hotel Mgt.	1	0.8	
Second Choice of Course			

such as interest, peer pressure, parents, relatives, prestige, employability etc. However, this study found out that the choice of LIS was strongly influenced by interest 66(55.0%) in the profession. This corroborates^{2,3,9,12,13} that the career choice of student is greatly influenced by interest in the profession. The implication of this finding is

that LIS is gaining some form of sudden recognition in Nigeria among today's undergraduates this perhaps stemmed from the proliferation of universities in Nigeria and that a good university is adjudged by National University Commission(NUC) by its standard library and librarians.

Table 6—LIS undergraduates perception about LIS

LIS/Profession Perception	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Library and Information Science is a lucrative course	18(15%)	23(19.2%)	22(18.3%)	57(47.5%)
Library and Information science is a last resort course	10(8.3%)	15(12.5%)	38(31.7%)	57(47.5%)
I am studying Library and Information Science by chance	12(10%)	32(26.7%)	28(23.3%)	48(40%)
Library and Information Science/ Librarianship is boring	2(1.7%)	6(5%)	39(32.5%)	73(60.8%)
There is nothing wrong with the course except that I am shy to tell people my course	10(8.3%)	6(5%)	32(26.7%)	72(60%)
I would like to go for another course after Library and Information Science	17(14.2%)	17(14.2%)	43(35.8%)	43(35.8%)
I don't see LIS/ Librarianship as a professional course		1(0.8%)	22(18.3%)	97(80.8%)

This study also found out that parent, friends, relatives had insignificant role to play in the choice of career of LIS and this negates the findings of ^{1,5,6,7,8} that parents had significant role to play in the choice of a career of their children. This insignificant role played by parents revealed that today's youths are rather independent and knowledgeable as regards the choice of a career due to availability of various sources of information especially the internet. Hence they could read up the prospects of a career and then make valid decisions.

A significant proportion of the students 40(33.3%) and 55(45.8%) choose LIS as their first and second most preferred course respectively and this was rather influenced by interest and not by previous work experience as noted by ^{1,15,18}. This implies that the place of intrinsic interest cannot be downplayed in the choice of a career. Similarly the choice of LIS as either first or second choice implies that the profession is gaining the recognition it deserves and this corroborates¹ the findings that majority of the students sampled choose LIS as their first choice of course.

The perception about LIS is changing as the undergraduates had a positive and strong perception about all the issues raised in the measurement scale. i.e. 99.1% affirmed that LIS is a professional course, 63.3% are of the opinion that they are not studying LIS by chance, etc. The implication of this finding is that undergraduates are well informed about LIS and they are studying it because of interest and not as a result of persuasion hence no negative perception about the course.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study

The findings from this study is informative to both researchers and the general populace that though

Library and Information Science may not yet be as prominent as other professional disciplines, it is however a professional discipline with lots of hidden benefits yet to be unraveled by the professionals themselves hence this calls for sustained and continuous awareness about LIS in order to clarify the notion that LIS schools are dumping ground for less academically stable students.

The study is further recommending that LIS curriculum should transcend theories and reflect more technological advancement to make the students fit into the electronic work environment as well because the twenty-first century librarian responsibilities has moved beyond the 'four walls of a library'.

Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria(LRCN) and Nigerian Library Association should be involved in enlightening the society about the profession through campaigns, seminars, workshop etc.

Conclusions

Library and Information science is a professional discipline that cuts across other disciplines such as computer science, communication, business management etc. hence the present day librarian is not only confined to 'cataloguing and classification', expecting only physical users of the library etc. but must be ready to go all out in order to meet the ever changing information needs of its users. This therefore calls for the fact that a librarian needs to be academically stable and this was clearly indicated among the undergraduates sampled that contrary to the widely held perception that LIS is a 'dumping ground' for less academically stable people the undergraduates had the necessary academic footing for the profession. However, despite the perceived popularity of LIS among the younger generation (undergraduates) LIS is yet to gain the due recognition as other professional disciplines like Law, medicine, pharmacy, engineering etc. in Nigeria.

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