



## **Career Skills and Job Involvement among Librarians in Academic Libraries Situated in Delta State, Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study explored career skills and job involvement among librarians in academic libraries situated in Delta State, Nigeria. To guide the study, two research questions were formulated, which are the: extent of career competencies of librarians in academic libraries in Delta State, Nigeria, and the significant influence of career competencies on work engagement among librarians. The questionnaire was used as the sole instrument for eliciting responses from a population of 97 respondents, which equally constitute the sample size for the study employing a total enumeration sampling technique. The data generated were subjected to analysis using the descriptive statistical tools. The study found that: librarians under this study possess a high level of proficiency in their respective roles such as understanding field-specific information resources, assisting users with their information needs, utilizing modern library technologies for research, collaborating with faculty and researchers, organizing library collections, and committing to ongoing professional development. The study equally found that librarians perceive their career competencies as playing a crucial role in their level of engagement and involvement in their work. The study concluded that career competencies are critical in shaping the effectiveness and success of librarians within academic libraries. Therefore, it was recommended among other things that institutions of higher learning should prioritize investing in programmes and initiatives aimed at enhancing librarians' competencies through continuous professional development.

Keywords: Career skills, job involvement, librarians, academic libraries

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### **Introduction**

In the realm of modern education, academic libraries serve as vital hubs for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, shaping the intellectual pursuits of educational institutions. Librarians, the guardians of these repositories, are tasked with orchestrating seamless information services and managing invaluable resources. In Delta State, Nigeria, the scholarly landscape reflects a diverse array of academic institutions, each presenting its own set of demands and challenges. Job involvement, defined as the emotional investment individuals have in their work and their commitment to organizational objectives, plays a significant role in organizational dynamics (Berg, 2020). This concept underscores the deep connection between employees and their roles within an organization. Research by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) indicates that high levels of job involvement correlate with positive outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, enhanced job performance, and greater organizational commitment. Engaged employees derive satisfaction from their roles, perform their duties effectively, and exhibit a strong attachment to their organization's mission and values.

In the context of academic libraries, job involvement takes on a particular significance. Academic librarians play a pivotal role in supporting learning, advancing scholarship, and serving the academic community. For these professionals, job involvement extends beyond mere task completion; it encompasses a profound sense of purpose and dedication to the institution's educational and research objectives. Librarians who are deeply involved in their jobs exhibit a proactive approach to their responsibilities. They actively seek out opportunities for professional development, staying abreast of emerging trends and best practices in library science and information management. By continuously enhancing their knowledge and skills, these librarians are better equipped to meet the evolving needs of their patrons and contribute meaningfully to the academic community. Moreover, high levels of job involvement among librarians foster a culture of innovation within academic libraries. Engaged professionals are more likely to generate and implement innovative ideas aimed at improving library services, enhancing user experiences, and promoting information literacy. Whether through the adoption of new technologies, the development of creative outreach programs, or the redesign of library spaces, these librarians demonstrate a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement in service delivery.

Job involvement among academic librarians significantly impacts the overall effectiveness and reputation of the library within the academic institution. Engaged librarians not only provide valuable support to students, faculty, and researchers but also champion the library's mission and values, fostering a vibrant intellectual community and contributing to academic success and scholarly achievements institution-wide. The field of librarianship has experienced significant transformation in recent years due to technological advancements and evolving user expectations. Librarians are now recognized as essential facilitators of information access and knowledge creation, moving beyond traditional custodianship of physical collections.

According to Jaeger and Mattson (2014), librarians are integral to the dynamic role of libraries as hubs of information access, dissemination, and education. Modern librarians are expected to possess a diverse range of competencies that extend beyond traditional library functions. Technical expertise is crucial for navigating digital systems, managing online databases, and resolving technological issues. Information management skills are equally important, enabling librarians to organize, evaluate, and disseminate information effectively. Librarians play a pivotal role as gatekeepers to vast repositories of knowledge, and their proficiency in information organization and retrieval is essential for meeting the diverse needs of library users.

Moreover, interpersonal competencies have become increasingly important in librarianship. Librarians are not only providers of information but also educators, collaborators, and advocates within their communities. Strong communication skills are essential for effectively engaging with patrons, understanding their information needs, and providing tailored assistance. Collaboration skills enable librarians to work effectively with colleagues, faculty, and other stakeholders to enhance library services and resources.

The digital transformation of libraries has accelerated the pace of change within the profession, necessitating continuous learning and adaptation among librarians. As noted by Brown (2016), emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analytics are reshaping the landscape of librarianship. Librarians must stay abreast of these developments to harness the potential of technology in advancing library services and meeting the evolving needs of users.

Career skills encompass a broad spectrum of competencies, ranging from technical proficiencies to soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and leadership. For librarians, proficiency in information literacy instruction, database management, and scholarly communication are essential for effectively fulfilling their roles in supporting research and scholarship (Saracevic, 2015). Furthermore, librarians must possess strong interpersonal skills to engage with faculty, students, and other stakeholders, fostering collaborative relationships and promoting the library's services and resources.

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## Statement of the Problem

In the realm of librarianship, the relationship between career skills and job involvement is a crucial area of inquiry. As academic libraries evolve to meet changing user needs and technological advancements, the skills and engagement level of librarians become essential factors influencing library effectiveness. However, the extent to which librarians' career skills impact their job involvement and subsequent effect on library effectiveness remains uncertain. This uncertainty stems from the evolving demands on librarians in modern academia, including technological advancements and shifting user expectations.

Despite the necessity for librarians to continually adapt and expand their skill sets, the correlation between these skills and job involvement remains unclear. Additionally, the significance of job involvement in driving library effectiveness and enhancing its reputation within academic institutions requires further exploration. While job involvement reflects librarians' emotional investment and commitment to their work, its relationship with career skills and its impact on library performance warrant systematic investigation. Therefore, the central problem lies in understanding the intricate interplay between career skills, job involvement, and their collective influence on librarians' effectiveness in academic libraries. Addressing this problem is essential for optimizing librarian performance, improving library services, and advancing the academic mission of educational institutions.

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## Research Questions

The subsequent research questions guided this study:

1. What is the extent of Career Competencies of librarians in Academic Libraries in Delta State, Nigeria?
2. Do Career Competencies have a significant influence on Work Engagement among librarians in Academic Libraries in Delta State, Nigeria?

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## Literature Review

Career Competencies refers to the combination of skills, knowledge, abilities, and expertise that individuals possess within their specific field of work. In the context of librarians, career competencies encompass a wide range of capabilities, including information management, technology integration, information literacy instruction, and effective communication (Nwosu, 2020). Career Competencies refers to the comprehensive set of skills, knowledge, capabilities, and expertise that an individual possesses within their professional domain, enabling them to effectively perform their job duties, contribute to their organization's objectives, and excel in their chosen career path. It encompasses a combination of technical proficiency, specialized knowledge, problem-solving abilities, communication skills, adaptability, and the capacity to apply learned concepts to practical situations. Career Competencies extends beyond basic job requirements, encompassing a deeper understanding of industry trends, advancements, and best practices. It empowers individuals to navigate complex challenges, seize opportunities for growth, and consistently enhance their performance and contributions within their chosen field of work (Aribola, 2019).

The level of career competencies among librarians in academic libraries in Delta State, Nigeria is a critical aspect that shapes their professional effectiveness and contributions to the academic community. Librarians in academic libraries play a pivotal role in facilitating access to information, supporting research endeavors, and enhancing the overall learning experience of students and scholars. Their ability to efficiently organize and manage resources, provide accurate and timely information, and employ advanced technological tools significantly impacts the quality of education and research within the institution. Also, the level of career competencies among librarians is a critical factor in ensuring the academic libraries effectively meet the

evolving needs of students, faculty, and researchers. Librarians with high career competencies are well-equipped to navigate the challenges posed by the digital age, where information is rapidly expanding and technology is reshaping the way knowledge is accessed and shared. They are better positioned to curate digital resources, implement innovative library services, and guide library users in harnessing the potential of digital technologies for academic pursuits.

Moreover, a high level of career competencies among librarians contributes to the establishment of a vibrant learning environment. Librarians who are adept at conducting information literacy programs empower students and researchers to develop essential skills in locating, evaluating, and utilizing scholarly resources. This, in turn, fosters critical thinking, research proficiency, and academic success among library patrons (Ohams, 2022).

Highly skilled librarians with robust career competencies greatly enhance the academic learning environment. They excel in designing and implementing information literacy programs, equipping students and researchers with skills to navigate information effectively. These programs empower individuals to locate and critically evaluate scholarly materials. Librarians foster critical thinking by facilitating access to diverse information sources and teaching patrons how to discern between reliable and unreliable sources. Through workshops and consultations, they cultivate intellectual curiosity, encouraging independent research and lifelong learning. Additionally, librarians promote research proficiency by guiding individuals through the research process, enhancing academic work quality and fostering academic integrity. Their expertise extends beyond library walls, positively impacting academic success and scholarly achievement. Investing in librarians' professional development is crucial for creating vibrant learning environments within academic institutions.

However, it is important to recognize that the level of career competencies among librarians may vary within Delta State. Factors such as access to professional development opportunities, training, and resources could influence librarians' ability to enhance their career competencies. Addressing any disparities and promoting continuous learning can help elevate the overall level of career competencies among librarians, ensuring they remain responsive to the ever-changing landscape of academia and information technology. In recent times, the role of librarians within academic libraries has undergone substantial transformation, necessitating a broad range of skills to effectively address the evolving needs of patrons and institutions. Scholarly literature provides valuable insights into the scope of career competencies exhibited by librarians in academic environments. As noted by Buhle Mbambo-Thata et al. (2015), librarians are expected to possess a diverse array of competencies and skills, encompassing technical proficiency, effective communication, and the capacity to adapt to emerging technologies. This underscores the multifaceted nature of librarianship and underscores the significance of continuously evaluating and augmenting career competencies.

**Technical Competencies:** Technical competencies play a crucial role in the effectiveness of librarians in academic libraries. With the rapid advancement of information technologies, librarians must stay abreast of new tools and platforms to effectively manage and disseminate information. As stated by Yamashita et al. (2014), "Technological competencies are vital for librarians to navigate the complexities of digital resources and provide seamless access to information for users." Librarians need to be proficient in various software applications, database management systems, and digital research tools to support teaching, learning, and research activities within the academic community.

**Communication and Interpersonal Skills:** Effective communication and interpersonal skills are essential for librarians to engage with patrons and collaborate with colleagues in academic libraries. According to Liao and Hsiao (2016), "Librarians should possess strong communication skills to interact with diverse user groups and address their information needs effectively." This involves active listening, clear articulation of ideas, and the ability to convey complex information in a user-friendly manner. Additionally, librarians must cultivate interpersonal skills to foster positive relationships with faculty, students, and other stakeholders, thereby enhancing the library's role as a central hub of academic activity.

**Adaptability and Lifelong Learning:** The dynamic nature of academia necessitates that librarians demonstrate adaptability and a commitment to lifelong learning. As noted by Adkins (2018), "Librarians need to continuously update their skills and knowledge to keep pace with evolving trends and technologies in the academic landscape." This requires a proactive approach to professional development, including participation in workshops, conferences, and online courses. Moreover, librarians should embrace change and innovation, recognizing them as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. By cultivating a culture of lifelong learning, librarians can enhance their career competencies and contribute effectively to the academic community's information needs.

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## Methodology

The study employed a survey research design, focusing on a population of 97 librarians from public and private university libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. The entire librarian population was considered as the sample size, utilizing a total enumeration technique, also known as a census. This approach, advocated by Israel (2009), is suitable for studies with small populations, ensuring comprehensive analysis without sampling errors. The adoption of quantitative methods, particularly questionnaires, facilitated the exploration of relationships between career competencies and work engagement among librarians. Likert scale responses were used to gauge the extent of various factors, offering insights into individual perspectives, motivations, and challenges.

Data collection involved the use of structured questionnaire to elicit self-reported information from librarians. The Likert scale, ranging from "Very Great Extent" to "No Extent," provided nuanced responses. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22, employing descriptive statistics for mean calculation and correlation coefficient analysis to test hypothesis. Standard deviation was also utilized to understand the variability of responses. The application of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis allowed for the examination of relationships

between dependent and independent variables, with a significance level set at 5 percent interval reliability. Overall, this methodological approach enabled a rigorous exploration of the interplay between career competencies, self-concept, and work engagement among librarians in academic settings.

## Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of Career Competencies of Librarians in Academic Libraries in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Extent of Career Competencies of Librarians

Questionnaire Items	VGE (5)	GE (4)	ME (3)	SE (2)	NE (1)	$\bar{x}$
Are you confident in assisting users with their information needs	28	37	13	3	1	4.10
Do you feel you understand your field's information resources well	28	32	15	4	3	3.95
How proficient are you at collaborating with faculty and researchers for specialized information services	20	35	16	7	4	3.73
Are you committed to ongoing professional development	21	31	13	11	6	3.61
do you believe you're proficient in organizing library collections to meet academic needs	19	27	20	9	7	3.55
How skilled are you in using modern library technologies for research	20	29	15	9	9	3.52
<b>N = 97 Criterion Mean = 3.00 Aggregate Mean = 3.74</b>						

Data in Table 1 revealed the different aspects of career competencies that librarians may possess. The aggregate mean of the competencies (3.74) is higher than the criterion mean (3.00), indicating a high level of proficiency among the respondents. Specifically, the librarians demonstrated high competency levels across various aspects of their profession. They are notably confident in assisting users with their information needs (mean score = 4.10), understand information sources in their field (mean score = 3.95), collaborate effectively with faculty and researchers for specialized information services (mean score = 3.73), and are committed to ongoing professional development (mean score = 3.61). Additionally, they are proficient in organizing library collections to meet academic needs (mean score = 3.55) and utilize modern library technologies for research purposes (mean score = 3.52). Overall, these findings suggest that the librarians surveyed exhibit strong career competencies, which bodes well for their effectiveness in their roles within the field.

Research Question 2: Do Career Competencies have a significant influence on Work Engagement among Librarians in Academic Libraries in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Extent to which Career Competencies Impact Work Involvement among Librarians

Questionnaire Items	VGE (5)	GE (4)	ME (3)	SE (2)	NE (1)	$\bar{x}$
Are you confident in your librarian identity	20	29	17	11	5	3.61
Do librarians with higher self-concepts tend to be more engaged	17	25	21	16	3	3.55
Do you believe self-concept affects competencies	19	28	20	7	8	3.53
Does your competency positively impact work engagement	18	27	19	12	6	3.52
How does perception of competencies influence motivation in the librarian role	18	28	15	11	10	3.43
How satisfied are you with career competency development opportunities	14	28	21	11	8	3.42
Are you satisfied with organizational support for development	11	23	15	20	13	3.07
How actively do you engage in professional development	11	22	21	14	14	3.05
<b>N = 97 Criterion Mean = 3.00 Aggregate Mean = 3.40</b>						

Data in Table 2 revealed the extent to which career competencies impact work involvement among librarians. The aggregate mean of the impact of career competencies on work involvement (3.40) exceeds the criterion mean (3.00), indicating a strong influence among the respondents. Specifically, librarians exhibit confidence in their identity (mean score = 3.61), with higher self-concept correlating with increased engagement (mean score = 3.55). They also believe in the relationship between self-concept and competencies (mean score = 3.53), and the positive impact of competencies on work engagement (mean score = 3.52). Additionally, perception of competencies affects motivation in their roles (mean score = 3.43). Librarians express satisfaction with career competency development opportunities (mean score = 3.42) and organizational support for development (mean score = 3.07). Lastly, they actively engage in professional development (mean score = 3.05). Overall, these findings underscore the importance of career competencies in shaping librarians' work involvement and highlight the value of self-concept, perceived competencies, and organizational support in promoting engagement and satisfaction within the profession.

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## Discussion of Findings

Findings from data generated from research question one suggests that the respondents possess a high level of proficiency in their respective roles. This indicates that librarians, on average, feel confident in their abilities across a range of key competencies related to their profession. These competencies likely include understanding field-specific information resources, assisting users with their information needs, utilizing modern library technologies for research, collaborating with faculty and researchers, organizing library collections, and committing to ongoing professional development.

In summary, the findings from Table 1 indicate that librarians generally possess a high level of career competencies, which is essential for their effectiveness and success in their professional roles. These competencies serve as foundational skills that enable librarians to fulfill their responsibilities and contribute positively to their institutions and communities.

The finding agrees with that of Johnson (2018) whose study delved into the intricate interplay between Career Competencies and librarians' performance within academic libraries in Scotland, UK and whose investigation unearthed a robust positive correlation between librarians' Career Competencies and their overall performance in academic libraries throughout Scotland. The finding corroborates that of Ahmed (2020) which recommended the implementation of personalized professional development plans based on individual self-concepts for improved performance and effective growth.

Findings from data generated from research question two suggest that librarians perceive their career competencies as playing a crucial role in their level of engagement and involvement in their work. It implies that librarians who possess higher levels of competency in various aspects of their profession are more likely to be actively engaged in their roles and feel more invested in their work tasks and responsibilities. The findings also imply that organizations and institutions may benefit from investing in programs and initiatives aimed at developing and enhancing the career competencies of their librarians. By providing opportunities for professional development, training, and support, organizations can help librarians further develop their skills and increase their level of engagement and involvement in their work.

Overall, the findings from Table 2 highlight the critical role that career competencies play in shaping the work involvement of librarians. Recognizing and fostering these competencies can lead to greater job satisfaction, productivity, and overall effectiveness within the library profession.

The finding align with that of Ali and Madukoma (2022) who carried out research on the influence of librarians' professional competencies on work engagement in federal universities in North West, Nigeria and found that both the level of work engagement and professional competencies of librarians were high and Librarians professional competencies do significantly influence their work engagement in federal universities in North-West, Nigeria. The finding also align with the recommendations of Salam et al. (2018) who conducted a survey titled competencies of librarians: A pivotal for real service delivery in University Libraries in Niger State and recommended that library management should allow and sponsor staff to attend CPD programmes so as to improve upon their proficiencies, librarians should try to apply their competencies in innovative and electronic information services.

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## Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings regarding career skills and job involvement among librarians in academic libraries situated in Delta State, Nigeria, indicate a strong correlation between career competencies and job engagement. The data from both research questions suggest that librarians possess a high level of proficiency in various aspects of their profession, including understanding information resources, assisting users, utilizing modern technologies, collaborating with stakeholders, organizing collections, and committing to ongoing development. This proficiency in career competencies serves as a foundational asset enabling librarians to effectively fulfill their roles and contribute positively to their institutions and communities.

Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of recognizing and fostering career competencies in librarians, as they significantly impact their level of engagement and involvement in their work. Librarians with higher competency levels are more likely to be actively engaged in their roles and feel invested in their responsibilities. Organizations and institutions can further support this by investing in programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing librarians' competencies through professional development, training, and organizational support.

Overall, the research highlights the critical role of career competencies in shaping the effectiveness and success of librarians within academic libraries. Recognizing, nurturing, and leveraging these competencies can lead to greater job satisfaction, productivity, and overall effectiveness, benefiting both librarians and the institutions they serve.

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## Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the research findings, here are some recommendations:

1. Institutions should prioritize investing in programmes and initiatives aimed at enhancing librarians' competencies through continuous professional development. This could include workshops, seminars, conferences, and online courses tailored to improve specific career skills relevant to librarianship.
2. Institutions should provide regular training sessions to help librarians stay updated with modern technologies and evolving practices in the field. This could involve hands-on training with new library management systems, database technologies, and other relevant tools.
3. Management of higher institutions of learning should create a culture that acknowledges and rewards librarians who actively engage in competency development activities. This could include performance-based incentives, promotions, or recognition within the organization.
4. Implement regular performance evaluations that assess librarians' competency levels and job engagement. Use these evaluations as opportunities to identify areas for improvement and provide constructive feedback and support.
5. Foster a work environment that values and supports librarians' professional growth and development. This includes promoting a culture of collaboration, innovation, and open communication where librarians feel empowered to pursue their career goals.

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