CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN PROMOTING NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
National Security is essential for the survival of Nigeria as a nation. The security situation in contemporary Nigeria is so volatile and terrifying that it seems that each new day comes new more security problems that are oftentimes beyond the control of individuals and as such pose significantly challenge to the civil society. This paper attempts to outline how library and information services can be employed to curb the rising scale of insecurity in the country. It also highlights the challenges being faced by library services in Nigeria. Recommendations were also made on how the library could be put in the right place to carry out its duty in reducing insecurity in the country.

Keywords: Role, Library, National Security, Information Service, Nigeria

Introduction

The simple dictionary definition of security is the state of being free from danger or threat. While the Merriam-webster dictionary defines it as the state of being protected or safe from harm, the Cambridge dictionary defines it as protection of a person, building, organization, or country against threats such as crime or attacks. It is observable that certain words like danger, threat, crime and attacks are recurrent in these definitions. Every human wants to stay safe, live without threat to his or her life and this explains the popular axiom that survival is the first law of nature. In the face of this age-long assertion, the need for human security cannot be over- emphasized. This is especially so within the context of national security. Yet, from Nigeria's past and contemporary experience, it is public knowledge that insecurity is fast overwhelming the land. Nigeria is at present faced with serious security challenges. These security challenges exhibit themselves in varying proportions, such as kidnappings, ritual killings, suicide bombings, farmers/herders clashes, cultism, militancy ethnic and religious conflicts armed banditry, politically motivated killings and violence of particular reference in Nigeria is the Boko Haram insurgency which has become a regular occurrence in daily lives of Nigerians (Imhonopi & Urim, 2012; Onuoha, 2014).There are proliferation of ethnic–regional religious and social organisations and movements with pronounced political agenda. Such organisations include the Bakassi Boys, the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP), the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), among others. These groups engage in activities that result in agitations with the resultant effect of escalating incidence of crime over the years, including armed assault on the citizenry, with indications that the trend will continue in future if effective control measures are not adopted and implemented. It is also unfortunate that the state of insecurity as expressed earlier is further compounded by the seemingly weaknesses in the functioning of security agencies, especially the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Sometimes, the presence of the Police Force, which is seen as the official organ, constitutionally in charge of the

maintenance of public security inspires insecurity rather than provide a sense of security. Also other organs of security have not fared better (Madubuike-Ekwe and Obayemi, 2019). The security problem which has been an issue of concern to past and the present administration in the country remains a central issue that challenges both the government and the people today. Moreso, that these security challenges had assumed formidable dimensions; forcing the country's political and economic managers, communities and, indeed the entire nation to regret the loss of their loved ones, investments and the absence of safety in most parts of the country. The consequences of this scenario in contemporary Nigeria include loss of lives, destruction of public and private properties, weak economy, slow pace of nation building, low productivity and national wealth, lack of respect for the country abroad, discouragement of foreign domestic investors, and the absence of peace. More importantly, there is also disquiet regarding the implications of the environment of insecurity for the nation's development. It is obvious that the prevailing situation tends to escalate the level of fear and anxiety in the society. The stability necessary for the maintenance of order and achievement of progress over the years is destroyed.

Efforts made to combat the rising insecurity.
It is important to stress that the gloomy picture of security in Nigeria has not gone unattended. In recognition of the challenges posed to the Nigerians society at large and in a bid to find lasting solution to the phenomenon, various researchers, scholars, security experts and consultants have contributed by making diverse recommendations and probable solutions to address this blight, but all to no avail. In the same vein, the Federal Government of Nigeria has since 1999 been investing heavy resources in the security architecture with the operations of many of these security agencies being revamped in response to emerging challenges. In this course, the government has tried to employ force- to-force strategy, 'carrot and stick' approach as well as diplomacy, yet, the insecurity threats and challenges have not abated (Vanguard Media, 2019; Mamman, 2020 and Reliefweb, 2021). With all these efforts and the futile results, it is observable that misinformation or lack of access to the right information is a factor that needs to be addressed. This brings to the fore the role that library and information services could play in eradicating the rising spate of insecurity in the country. This paper therefore sets out to discuss the potential roles of libraries and their information services in national security in Nigeria.

Libraries and Information Services
A library could be defined as a body of recorded information for a specific purpose, organized for use, and made available to users. It comprises both the collection of information materials, and the place where the material are kept for consultation. Generally, libraries, regardless of their types, collect, stock, process, organise, disseminate and distribute information/knowledge recorded in documentary and non- documentary source/formats. The aim of this is to give high value to the needs and expectations of users of the resources because information resources are vital for all round human development and lasting objective of the library is to provide access to relevant information resources. It is however important to stress that with the development of the 21ˢᵗ century, a library may or may not have walls. With *Information and Communication Technology, libraries no longer have borders in terms of collection space. Information service on the other hand is the service provided to present* data, knowledge or information *to people. It is simply a service that draws attention to information possessed in the collection in anticipation of demand (Wordpress, 2010). Libraries and information centres provide a variety of documentation and information services to* their users in order

to satisfy their information needs. These services may be both anticipatory and responsive. The need for information service arose as a result of increase in knowledge in all fields as well as increase in book production which subsequently resulted in increased library collection. Moreover, documents were becoming available in different languages and in different forms just as new subjects kept emerging. With knowledge growing at this fast rate; it becomes very difficult for users to key pace with the growing knowledge and keep themselves up to date in their area of interest. It may also not be possible for the users to search the required information from the large collection of documents on their own. Hence, there is a need of information service. Modern libraries provide various types of documentation and information services. Reference staff helps users to find out relevant information from various sources. Generally, information services available in an information system include Reference Services, Selective dissemination of information (SDI), Current awareness Services (CAS), Literature Search Services, Document delivery services, Online information searching, Abstracting and indexing services and Reprographic services (Hossain and Islam, 2008 and Adetomiwa, 2020). These services are potential effective weapons that could be used to combat insecurity in Nigeria.

The potential roles of libraries and information services in national security in Nigeria

Historically, libraries have always been a major key contributor to national development and it is appropriate that they take a leadership role in the current movement on national security. In the light of this, the role of libraries of all types in national security is not just to spread information in a particular area but to offer a holistic approach, around all aspects of the policies in the country. In fact social responsibility is enumerated to be a part of librarianship. This is because the obligations of libraries are acts that are designed to benefit the society at large (Kagan, 2005 and Vijesh and Mohanan, 2018).The issue of national security is therefore core value of librarianship. Since no meaningful learning, education and economic development can take place in a context of insecurity and brazen destruction of lives and properties the onus lies on the library for timely, relevant, effective and efficient dissemination of information that can contribute to peace and national security in Nigeria by helping the citizens to understand their role in national security. It has been established that most security challenges around the world can be attributed to misinformation, lack of access to right and up to date information or and complacency of information institutions(Ahinkorah, Ameyaw, Hagan Jr., Seidu and Schack, 2020; Oyeyemi, 2020). This implies that without information, national security plans may remain idealistic and inclined towards failure. This fact has been corroborated by Anabi (2010) who noted that having access to the right and accurate information frees someone from the burden of ignorance, misconception, social unrest and other social vices. It therefore important to use the weapons of the ability of individuals to access and exploit relevant, timely, quality and effective information and translate it to knowledge. As noted by Olunlade (2012) dissemination of relevant information service is a catalyst which propels and makes realistic and lasting solutions to security challenges possible. In explaining the roles of libraries in national security Ugwuanyi (2011) postulated that library and information service is a key player in providing unhindered access to essential information resources for economic, security and cultural advancement. Similarly, Echezona (2007) stated that effective information dissemination through libraries, internet and other mass media will put the people and the government at alert on facts of potential security challenges, including their causes, evolution, consequences and solution. Libraries as repositories of information and knowledge can provide a guide to many of the

answers to our present day security challenges through provision of information resources, services and guidance. Generally, libraries are at the fore front of eradication of illiteracy as they provide necessary facilities and materials for the development of reading skills and promotion of adult education to stem the tide of ignorance in the society. Also as noted by Omotayo (2005), the library provides information to guide citizen sin period of security challenges in enlightened societies. The library and its resources provide a judgment free zone in which people can investigate the underlying factors of insecurity without worry of exposure. They are also provided with a greater understanding of the differences and similarities between people of the world which can potentially initiate and expand feeling of tolerance and empathy for cultures, religious and traditions outside of one's immediate sphere. This implies that libraries have to be stocked with information resources that can promote peace, unity, progress, peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationship among all the communities. In recent years, electronic media is one of the most effective and powerful means of mass mobilization. A nation not mobilized enough to withstand insecurity cannot aspire to preserve its freedom, faith, and ideology for a period of time. More importantly, the long years of political ethnic and religious distrust in the country has fanned the flames for crises that have polarized the nation and divided Nigeria across ethnic and religious lines. Electronic media is also a good weapon that could be employed by libraries in handling insecurity. Libraries could post information on restive areas, advantages of united society, need to allow peace to reign and the benefits of living together in harmony on their social media handles. Also, public libraries, academic libraries, special libraries and other information institutions like national archives are in the best strategic position to reach various group of people in the community. As noted by Ossai-Ugbah(2013) because of their professional background, information using the language they understand most, since languages is a factor of synergy. In providing information services, information officers may need to adopt the use of mobile libraries to bring library services to the doorsteps of citizens to educate them on national security. As observed by Nwalo (2003), the compilations made by mobile libraries reflect perceived needs of local communities.

This will help to provide security services to communities and help citizens and patrons of the library attain maximum information services in spite of their vocations. In the same vein, Bhatti (2010) postulated that libraries and archival centers could also expand their concepts of library information services to build up positive interaction within their community. Libraries and information centres can provide required information resources and services by liaising with these groups in organising seminars, conferences, workshop and community development meetings by so doing they have proven their usefulness and contribute their own quota in maintaining peace and harmony towards national security. In a country plagued by political unrest, ethnic and religious violence kidnapping and terrorism, the onus is now on information institutions of which library is one, to rise up to the challenge by becoming more proactive in the dissemination of the right information for maintaining security, justice and peace. This is because libraries are part of the community. However, this could only be achieved if the library is accorded a prominent position in our development planning and adequate fund actually made available for the provision of information resources, facilities and modern Information Communication Technology (ICT). This is due to the fact that in Nigeria, scanty attention has been paid to provision of library information services as an integral part of national security (Aniebo, 2012), resulting in Nigerian libraries being faced with myriads of challenges.

Challenges faced by Nigerian libraries

Libraries offer a variety of information and documentation services for national security, in the process of performing this fundamental role of national security; they face some challenges that inhibit effective and timely delivery of these services. These challenges include: frequent power outage, inadequate funding, obsolete library resources and facilities, lack of modern Information and Communication Technology resources and facilities as well as inadequate technical manpower. Other challenges include non- conducive operational hours, funding, obsolete library resources and lack of technological know-how, poor telecommunication facilities (Adekunmisi, 2005; Laaro, 2018).

Conclusion

The discussion so far has shown that library and information services can contribute positively to national security through provision of relevant and timely information resources and services to the people. However, this is possible when library and information services are given the recognition it deserves from the government and policy makers. Also there would be the need to attend to the challenges being faced by the provision in the present dispensation.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Government and policy makers should pay considerable attention to library development through adequate funding, provision of constant power supply, employment and retaining of professional trained librarian in order to deliver their services effectively.
2. The Federal ministry of education should redesign the curriculum of various degree and non-degree awarding institutions to expose all students to issues on national security while libraries are encouraged to acquire security related resources.
3. Government should provide community information centres and reading rooms in all nooks and crannies of the country for the dissemination of appropriate information to all strata of society.
4. Libraries should explore properly the use of traditional services like selective dissemination of information services, current awareness services, exhibitions, display, seminars and occasional open air film shows in dissemination of information on national security.

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