

Research Article

## Freelance Librarianship: A Source of Income for Unemployed Library and Information Science Graduates

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**Abstract** There is no doubt that information brokering is an emerging profession in Nigeria and other African countries. There is a need for LIS students to develop various ways to become job creators, rather than job seekers, which can be achieved via entrepreneurship. This study discovers how libraries and library and information science graduates can become entrepreneurs in through its service delivery and will also suggest possible recommendations that will help Libraries and information science graduates become entrepreneurs in through its service delivery by revealing the statistical trend of unemployment from 2006-2016, and gives a light on how library and information science can be linked to entrepreneurship. The study also buttresses some opportunities for library and information science graduates in the area of business and entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Conclusively, the study provides prerequisites needed by librarians before freelancing. Recommendations based on universities and librarian's variables were made on how to create employment for graduates in Nigeria. The study also identified some limitations that can be worked upon in the future.

**Keywords** *Entrepreneurship; Freelance librarianship; Graduates; Income generation and Unemployment*

### 1. Introduction

The issue of unemployment, insurgent and social vices among graduates and youths in Nigeria and other countries in the world are no longer news. It has done more harm than good in our society. Most students in tertiary institutions are not versatile, and some with a straight-jacketed mindset that the only places they will work in are offices that is garnished with air-conditions.

Others have a fixed mentality that no matter how long it takes to hook a job; the places they will ever work in must be related to their areas of study. With Nigerian universities, polytechnics and colleges of education graduating over fifteen (15) thousand graduates yearly, without guaranteed employment opportunities thereby adding to the current and increasing employed youths in the country, despite various unsuccessful efforts made by the government to help reduce unemployment in the country. Several job vacancy adverts are being posted online in some reputable jobsites (Indeed job alert, Career247, Job.naij, Jobberman etc.) on daily basis. Most of their requirements are obtainable but the

process, cost of application and document delivery to the hiring organization is expensive, strenuous and with a slim chance of actually getting the job.

There is a need for LIS students to develop various ways to become job creators, rather than job seekers, which can be achieved via entrepreneurship. This study will be of significance in the view of adding to existing and future literature on the how libraries and library and information science graduates can become entrepreneurs in through its service delivery and will also suggest possible recommendations that will help libraries and information science graduates become entrepreneurs in through its service delivery.

## 2. Unemployment in Nigeria

Previously, the former President of Nigeria, His Excellency Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communication Technology (CT), and the Ministry of Youth Development, launched an annual Business Plan Competition (BPC) for aspiring young entrepreneurs in Nigeria in line with the Federal Government's drive to create more jobs for Nigerians. The program was implemented in partnership with Nigeria's private sector, which was requested to provide funding support. Some of the program objectives is to; attract ideas and innovations from young entrepreneurial aspirants from Universities, Polytechnics, Technical colleges, and other post-Secondary institutions in Nigeria, provide a onetime Equity grant for 1,200 selected aspiring entrepreneurs to start or expand their business concepts and mitigate start up risks, generate 80,000 to 110,000 new jobs for currently unemployed Nigerian youth over the three years during which the three cycles will be implemented, provide business training for up to 6,000 aspiring youth entrepreneurs spread across all geo-political zones in Nigeria, encourage expansion, specialization and spin-offs of existing businesses in Nigeria, and to enable young entrepreneurs to access a wide business professional network and improve their visibility. This programme, according to Oyeronke (2012) has failed to achieve its objective, which is as a result of corruptions.

This situation seems to have worsened as the aborted Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) job test held in the first quarter of 2014 revealed that over 125,000 job applicants, mostly young Nigerians, showed up in Abuja and Lagos for the advertised 4,000 positions in the NIS. On Saturday, April 9, 2016, the Nigerian Navy Recruitment initially scheduled to hold nationwide on that day was postponed in order for the Nigerian Navy to figure out how it would guarantee a well-planned and hitch-free recruitment exercise. This was because 300,000 young Nigerians had applied for 3,000 naval jobs (Omonobi, 2016).

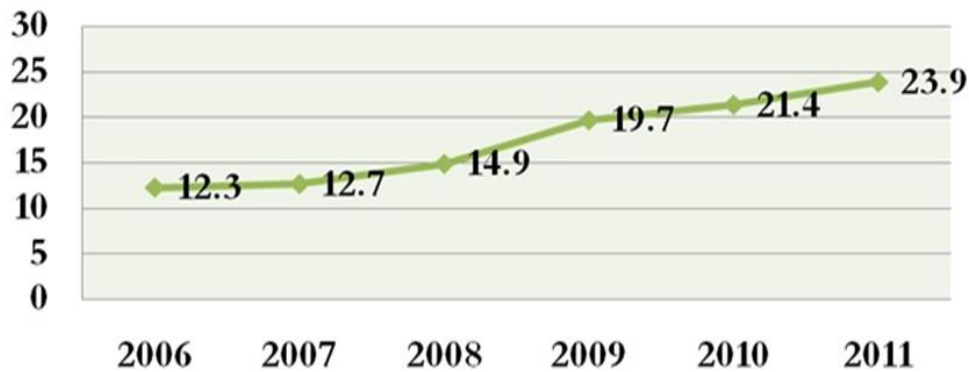
In the same 2016, the police recruitment exercise which was designed to absorb 10,000 qualified Nigerian youths into its workforce attracted about 796,152 applications before the end of the deadline for applications (Premium Times, 2016). This implies that roughly 80 Nigerian youths were jostling for a job opening.

As this was not enough, on June 14, 2016, a report had it that within 36 hours after the launch of the Federal Government Job portal calling for applications from qualified Nigerian youth graduates for employment opportunities consisting of 500,000 openings, about 403,528 persons successfully applied for the advertised federal government jobs (Adetayo, 2016).

Thus, the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training in Nigeria is ballooning with dangerous portents as this class of Nigerians are forced onto the fringes of society without any form of social or economic safety net to cushion their precarity (Imhonopi et al., 2016).

According to Sahara Reporters (2016) a total of 41,032 (45.72 percent) of the 89,755 people who responded to the survey on jobberman.com indicated that they were unemployed graduates.

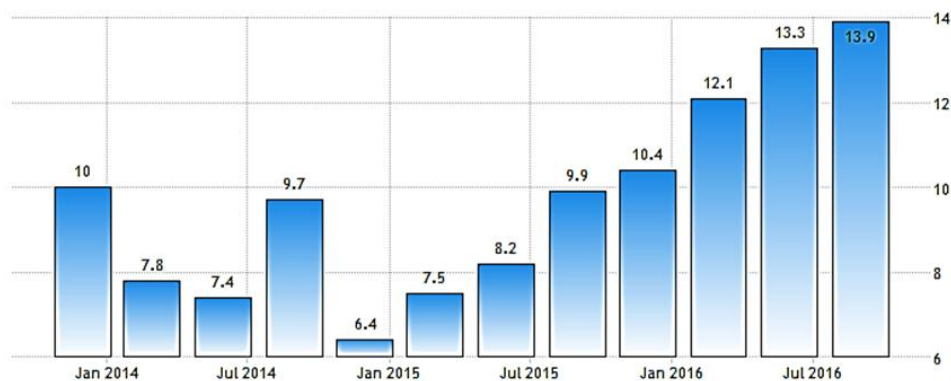
It was revealed that about 23 per cent of adults and 60 per cent of youths in Nigeria are unemployed, based on an increase from 12.3 per cent in 2006 to 23.9 per cent in 2011 as a result from inconsistent policies, misappropriation of funds for empowerment schemes and increasing de-industrialization and collapse of small businesses due to poor power supply (Kale, 2013).



Source: Y. Kale (2013) Unemployment, Poverty and Prevalence of Insecurity in Nigeria.

Figure 1: Unemployment trend in Nigeria (2006-2011)

More recently, the National Bureau of Statistics (2017) reported the alarming increasing rate of employed Nigerians via the Figure 2 below.



Source: www.tradingeconomics.com, National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria

Figure 2: Unemployment trend in Nigeria (2014-2016)

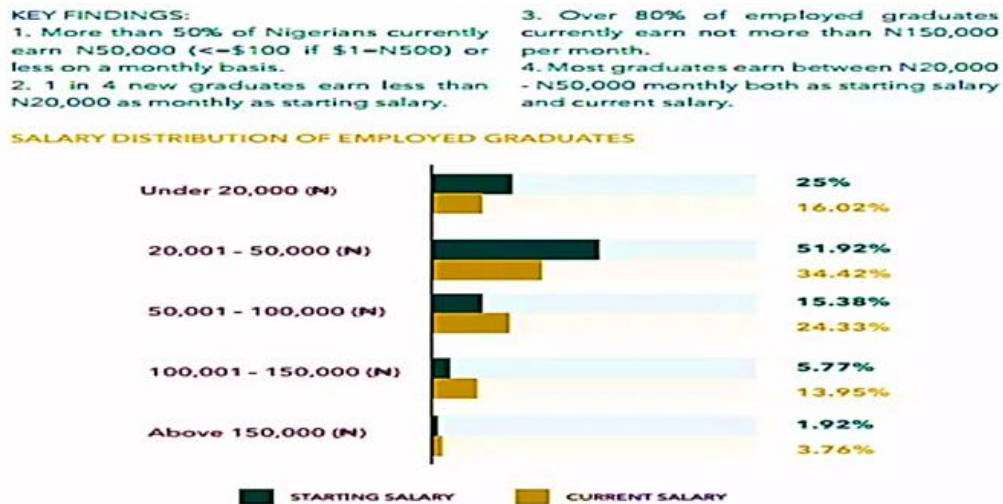
Stutern, a Lagos-based online platform has published the salary distribution of employed graduates in Nigeria. Stutern carries out studies on employment in Nigeria and Nigerian universities and this year (2017), they created something called the Nigerian Graduate report. According to the report released based on the data between 2010-2016 revealed in the Figure 3.

### 3. Library and Business

The type of business idea within librarianship is about selling information. Branson (2011) says that it is not only about having an idea but also making sure that it sells or works. With the business of

information brokering, it is necessary to identify which areas of librarianship should be commercialized or turned around for entrepreneurship.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2000) categorically stated the six fundamental roles of libraries: knowledge conservation, information, education, research, culture and entertainment. Put together, these form the bedrock of duties and functions of library and information professionals. In other words, these are the basis of information professionalism. Today, there are academic librarianship, school librarianship, media librarianship, law librarianship, and corporate librarianship.



Source: Ikeke, 2017.

Figure 3: Salary distribution of employed graduates in Nigeria

The front runners in this type of business in Nigeria are not many and where they exist they are still referred to as librarians. The British Council in Nigeria sells information in its domain to the public in Nigeria, which is membership oriented. Photocopies of materials are charged and paid for Referrals are the only free takeaway materials. According to a study carried out by Ocholla (2009), “the analysis of data and the subsequent results revealed that, while Botswana has information consultants and brokers, there is a need for their services in management mainly but also in information technology, information systems and informal training”. There is no doubt that information brokering is an emerging profession in Nigeria and other African countries. Where library and information services are free, most especially within academic, public and national domains, library users are not patronizing them as expected, apart from paying for registration or ISSN /ISBN numbers obtained from the National Library. Students go to library just to read. The apathy from clients is due to a number of factors. The question of introducing an entrepreneurial approach may be discouraging.

Another angle to it is that many people do not mind paying for those services if good services or products are offered them (Ojo, 2012).

### 3.1. Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Library and Information Science Graduates

Issa et al. (2014) stated that “today, no discipline or field of study in the nation’s institutions of higher learning is insulated from this unfortunate trend of graduate unemployment” - Library and information science graduates are inclusive.

According to Oghenetega and Ugeh (2014) the concept of entrepreneurship has been defined by different authorities in field of studies, but it seems as if there is no universally acceptable definition of the term yet, especially this moved of digital age were everyone (youths and graduates) want to use all means to get rich.

Nwosu (2014) sees entrepreneurship as a process of actions of an entrepreneur who is a person always in search of something new and exploits such ideas into gainful opportunities by accepting the risk and uncertainty with the enterprise.

Entrepreneurship is the process of using initiative to transform business concept to new venture, diversify existing venture or enterprise to high growing venture potentials (United Nations industrial development Organization, 1998).

From the foregoing definitions the researchers simply refer to entrepreneurship as processes of seeking for information or means of discover ways to change your social and economic living with tangible income from individual establishment. Another definition is risk-taking businessperson or somebody who initiates or finances new commercial enterprises Therefore, anybody that can provide services or sell goods which bring money to his/her way is an entrepreneur.

A Freelance Librarian is a trained library and information scientist who is self-employed, acting as an independent contractor that markets, sells and provide information services using available resources with a motive of profit making. Freelancers often work from home, rather than a commercial address. It started in Paris, France (1930) and later in New York, USA (1960). They are also known as Information brokers, Consultants, and Information Retailers, etc.

Graduates of library and information science (LIS) from higher institutions in Nigeria, has been trained and possess skills based on the LIS and Entrepreneurial courses taught during their course of study and serves as a springboard in the right direction towards ending the scourge of joblessness.

Adomi (2009) opined that career opportunities for librarians are endless. Nearly every human endeavor uses information and librarians are masters of information. The tasks for a librarian who wants to work in a setting other than a traditional library is to identity an area and then convince somebody that they (their organization) need a librarian- an information professional. Today libraries are shifting their role from the custodian of traditional information resources and services to digital.

These have affect careers and skills needed from newly library and information science LIS graduates in Nigeria (Lucky & Ifeka, 2014). Entrepreneurial opportunity exists where there is a need, want, problem or challenges in librarianship that can be addressed, solved and or satisfied in an innovative way it is about recognition or discovery of new ways of provision of library and information services and allied or information related services (Oghenetega & Ugeh, 2014). They went further for comprehensive list of entrepreneurial opportunities available for LIS graduates as follows - Library equipment business, publishing and printing business, information brokerage business, courier services business, library consultancy business, rural information provision business, stationary business, reprographic business, art gallery business, vendor business freelance information business etc. Other entrepreneurial opportunities for LIS graduates include:

- Database Management
- Cataloguing and Classification Services
- Abstracting and indexing services to publishers
- Records management for Banks and Hospitals etc.
- Writing articles in area of LIS and other disciplines.

- Website designing
- Library Application Software developer
- Online Content management
- Data Miner and Analyst
- Digitalization of library materials
- Book reviewing etc.
- Online marketing
- School Media Resource Centre configuration

Each of the entrepreneurial opportunities required LIS graduates to develop professional's knowledge and skills to provide the above services to people effectively and efficiently in the society. They should also have a large scope of the aforementioned areas of entrepreneurship.

### 3.2. Prerequisites for Freelance Librarianship

- Be computer literate
- Select your key area of interest and develop it
- Read widely
- Be a solution provider
- Be creative and innovative
- Improve your communication skills
- Belong to the liberal school of thought
- Negotiation power
- Confidentiality
- Partnership in cases of capitals for start-up
- Look out for your clients and discuss your business ideas and how they can benefit from it

### 4. Conclusion

This study has attempted a connexion between Library and Information Science graduates and entrepreneurship. The findings deduced from this study include the following:

The issue of unemployment is still on the rampage despite efforts made by the past and present Government of Nigeria.

The study depicts that the salary range of Nigerian undergraduates is low due to the current economic situation in the country.

It was also revealed that entrepreneurship seems to be the only way out for Library and Information Science graduates though freelance librarianship to help them generate income and means for survival in Nigeria.

Conclusively, for an LIS to be able to venture into freelance librarianship; they are basic prerequisites needed to consider so as being able to be a successful entrepreneur in the labour market.

### Recommendations

Nigerian tertiary institutions should teach our undergraduate students entrepreneurial skills that will help them become job creators, rather than job seekers. Therefore, entrepreneurial education business must be taught to undergraduate students.



In Nigeria and the whole world at large entrepreneurship is being seen as a key to economic and developmental process. When people are exposed to entrepreneurship, it is evident that they would be opened to opportunities that will enable them to become creative and productive. This will enhance job creation and improve the standard of living of an individual in the society.

### Limitations of the Study

It should be noted that the study presented here is a discussion paper and further study can be made empirically to survey perceptions and entrepreneurship skills of graduates in Nigeria.

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