

CENSORSHIP CHALLENGES ON BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT MATERIALS IN SELECTED PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was to examine censorship challenges to books in selected public libraries in South-West Nigeria. A total of 34 librarians drawn through total enumeration method represent the sample for the study. Five research questions were raised to guide the study. Questionnaire was used as instrument for the collection of data. The results of the study demonstrate that majorly censorship serve as control on books in the public libraries. The major reason from the perception of librarian on censorship of book materials in public libraries is that it helps protect the public libraries users from dangerous and harmful materials. Categories of censored books in public libraries are majorly books that can stir up religious crisis, materials that contain sexually explicit contents and books that are sensitive to National issues and are threat to national security. The major ways identified are that public libraries should have a formal policy to handle censor complaints from the library users and also communicating the library's position on intellectual freedom to the public library users. The study recommends public libraries should frequently update their policy and enforce the policy whenever censorship issues arise.

Keywords: Censorship, Intellectual Property Right, Intellectual Freedom, Book Materials, Public Libraries

Introduction

A public library is primarily established to provide viable and revealed services to the entire members of the public. The public library is therefore the main arena through which the overall information resources in various areas of knowledge are made freely available to all members of the society irrespective of age, sex, religion, cultural background and educational standard as well as political and social inclination.

In fact, providing adequate information services to all that need it is one of the targets of the public libraries. Access to the information must be unhindered because of the intellectual freedom which enable individual the right of access to information. This freedom protects an individual's right to access, explore, consider, and express ideas and information as the basis for a self-governing, well-informed citizenry. Intellectual freedom comprises the bedrock for freedoms of expression, speech, and the press and relates to freedoms of information and privacy. The proponents of intellectual freedom value an individual's right to choose informational concepts and media to formulate thought and opinion without repercussion, restrictions to access and barriers to privacy of information all of which constitute intellectual freedom issues. One other prominent is censorship.

Censorship is seen as the control of the information and ideas circulated within a society. Dafiaghor (2011, p. 3) sees censorship as "the removal, suppression or restricted circulation of literary, artistic or educational materials on the grounds that they are morally or otherwise objectionable in the light of standards applied by the censor". In public libraries, censorship could be in the form of examination of books, plays, films, television and radio programs, news reports, and other forms of communication for the purpose of altering or suppressing ideas found to be objectionable, harmful, or offensive. Information that is censored generally falls into socio-political, sexual and religious categories (Malley, 1990). Public library collections such as books that contain and feature most of these issues usually face the challenge of been censored. In fact, some organisations, associations and users might consider it indecent, obscene, heretical, blasphemous, seditious or treasonous for some category of users like children and adolescent or the general public, most especially in a public library where all category of users have free access to them.

American Library Association started operating annual Banned Books week in 1982. This was with the purpose of drawing attention and creating awareness on censorship across the country in libraries of all kinds. As part

of the campaign ALA issued a list of the most challenged books in the preceding year, and the top five titles in 2007. The titles and the reasons why they were challenged were summarized as:

- (i) And Tango Makes Three, by Justin Richardson/Peter Parnell. Reasons: anti-ethnic, sexism, homosexuality, anti-family, religious viewpoint, unsuited to age group.
- (ii) The Chocolate War, by Robert Cormier. Reasons: sexually explicit, offensive language, violence.
- (iii) Olive's Ocean, by Kevin Henkes. Reasons: sexually explicit, offensive language.
- (iv) The Golden Compass, by Philip Pullman. Reason: religious viewpoint.
- (v) The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain. Reason: racism. (Source: www.ala.org/bbooks/).

No doubt, in public libraries, censorship had been practiced and is being practiced both in the developed and developing countries as Yahaya et al. (2013) testified. There are some books whose contents are considered to be offensive by some religious sets; offensive to their religion, beliefs, values etc. There are still some other books that is perceived to be too explicit about the details and secrets of government (e.g. Tenants of the house by Wale Okediran) and might be forced to be withdrawn from the library shelf either by legal means or through public protest thereby denying public library users access to such compendium of knowledge (Fieser, 2017). In view of these therefore, the library faces a great challenge in trying to be responsive to this censorship complains and issues while striking a balance in the provision of access to information materials for the users in the public library.

Some librarians in public libraries fear that purchasing certain book could result in a book challenge from the community and that it is not worth the effort it would take to defend it. A collection development policy that specifically aims for a balance of views can help the librarian make selection decisions without self-censoring. In some cases of self-censorship, the librarian does not make information available to the community based on his or her own judgment of the materials. It should be noted that librarians are not expected to censor any information, whether such information negates their belief and personal interest or not. At the same time, a book should not be purchased exclusively because it is controversial or addresses sensitive topics. Books should be selected on their merit according to the selection policy of the library (Sheely, 2007). Librarians must acquire and processed all the informational resources

equally. It should be noted however that, in Nigerian public libraries; the purpose of book censorship varied with some censors targeting material considered to be indecent or obscene; heretical or blasphemous; or seditious or treasonous (Yaya, et al 2013; Doolan et al. 2016).

Statement of Problem

Book censorship is an affront to a democratic nation and something that library associations across the world attempt to combat through their ethical policies, adhered to by members. It can take several forms, from subtle pressure not to purchase material on a certain topic or by certain authors, or more overt campaigns by governments, special interest groups or individuals within a community who wish their own moral viewpoint to be at the fore. Nigerian public libraries face the challenge of selecting materials for the library by not been oppressive or offensive to the individual right of some sections of the society or face the wrath of the law. Various studies on censorship in public libraries in this part of the world have shown that stated policy and procedures that guides the librarians in dealing with censorship issues are either not used, outdated or not current.

There are also limited studies focusing on challenges librarians face when trying to respond to censorship issues and criteria for determining books to be censored in Nigerian public libraries. Similarly, there exist paucity of literature on reasons why some books are censored most especially in Nigerian public libraries. In the light of these, this study sought to examine censorship challenges, provide guidelines on how librarians in public libraries should respond to and overcome the inevitable task of censoring books in selected public libraries in South-West Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine censorship challenges to books in selected public libraries in South-West Nigeria. Specifically, the study will:

- i. Examine the perception of librarians about censorship of books and other materials in the public libraries.
- ii. Establish the reasons for censorship of books and other print materials.
- iii. Determine the category of books that are at risk of been censored in public libraries.
- iv. Identify ways by which public libraries handle censorship complaints.
- v. Find out the procedures and policies that guides public libraries censorship decisions.

Research Questions

To achieve the stated objectives, the following research questions were asked:

- i. What is the perception of librarians about censorship of books in the library?
- ii. What are the reasons for books censorship?
- iii. What are the categories of books that have been censored in the library?
- vi. What are the ways through which public libraries handle censorship complaints?
- iv. What are the procedures and policies guiding public libraries censorship decisions?

Literature Review

Censorship

According to Fieser (2017), the issue of censorship rests on several interrelated concepts, foremost of which is free speech, a term that is used interchangeably with free expression. Central to the concept of free speech is that people have a legitimate expectation to articulate their ideas freely, without limitation or interference. Therefore, Fieser (2017) defined Censorship as the suppression of free speech, often on the grounds that an act of expression harms or offends the public. Expressions are sometimes restricted because they are judged to be obscene, blasphemous, unpatriotic, seditious, or immoral. The term "censorship" usually applies to governmental restrictions in free speech in public places, such as a law that restricts displaying a Nazi flag, or a government official who shuts down a public art display. However, efforts to restrict free speech can also come from private groups, and these are best termed non-governmental challenges, rather than "censorship" in its governmental sense. For example, a publisher might cancel a book contract because the project has generated too much controversy.

Going by the explanation by Famous (2011), censorship and the ideology supporting it could be traced back to ancient times, and to the fact that every society has customs, taboos, or laws by which speech, dress, religious observance, and sexual expression are regulated. In Athens for instance, where democracy first emerged, censorship was well known as a means of enforcing the prevailing orthodoxy. Indeed, Plato was the first recorded thinker to formulate a rationale for intellectual, religious, and artistic censorship. In his ideal state outlined in "The Republic", official censors would prohibit mothers and nurses from relating tales deemed bad or evil. Plato also proposed that unorthodox notions about God or the

hereafter be treated as crimes and that formal procedures are established to suppress heresy. Freedom of speech in Ancient Rome was reserved for those in positions of authority. The poets Ovid and Juvenal were both banished, and authors of seditious writings were punished severely. The emperor Nero deported his critics and burned their books. Unique historical considerations, beliefs, culture, religion and other related factors have originated the idea of censorship in any society. Ironically, censorship had been practiced and is being practiced by many countries in the world today, both in the developed and developing countries (Sayers, 2007; Malley, 1990). It cuts across the democratic and military system of government of some countries like: United States of America, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, France, China, South Africa, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi-Arabia and in Nigeria.

Censorship in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the purpose of censorship varied, with some targeting material considered to be indecent or obscene; heretical or blasphemous; or seditious or treasonous. Thus, ideas have been suppressed under the guise of protecting three basic social institutions: the family, the church, and the Nigerian governments (Dafiahor, 2011).

The organized church and mosque have soon joined the Nigerian government as an active censor. In Nigeria, censorship is no more acceptable for being practiced in the name of religion than for national security. Nigerian national security and defense runs a very close to the religious impulse as a rationale for suppression of information. While nowhere near as old as the religious impulse to censor, in its more modern form it has been even more pervasive (Malley, 1990). And while the influence of religion on secular affairs is muted in Nigeria, the influence of governments usually is not. It is difficult to think of any government that would forego the power, in perceived extreme circumstances, to censor all media, not simply those that appear online. The question, asked in a real world scenario, is what could be considered extreme enough circumstances to justify such action?

In the Nigerian context, governments have used a powerful array of techniques and arguments to marshal support for their censorship efforts. One of the earliest, as noted, is the religious argument. Certain things are deemed to be offensive in the eyes of the Deity. These things vary from country to country, religion to religion, even sect to sect. They are mostly, though not always, sexual in nature. The commentaries on the nature of the impulse to be censorious towards sexual expression are too numerous

even for a wide ranging project like this. The curious reader is urged to read far and wide in the classic texts to see that the problem of Nigerian governments and her citizens reacting in this way is not a new one (Yaya, Achonna & Osisanwo, 2013). During the military regimes in Nigeria, a lot of media houses were closed down, many journalists were arrested by state security officials, clamped into detention and most of these media men were killed. Because some government officials were offended with their publications, hence, they were severely dealt with.

There are parents who object to the teaching of safe sex models in Nigerian public schools. Such objections pose an obvious problem: do their rights as the parents of their own children supersede the rights of all children in a classroom (or library, or online community) to have access to information that could save their lives? (Packard, 1999; Rosen, 2005) In Nigeria, the legal precedents, which usually provide clear guidelines in such matters, are mixed here. Courts have ordered operations and vaccinations in the public health interest, but courts have also ruled that religious beliefs are a compelling answer to public concerns. The question is not whether there are legitimate parental claims, but rather at what point is there a public interest that overrides them? Is it only in matters of imminent and life-threatening danger or does it extend beyond that clearly delineated realm?

In the Nigerian society, the following types of censorship are common (Yahaya et al., 2013; Dafiaghor, 2011): moral censorship, military censorship, political censorship, religious censorship, and corporate censorship. Books that do not conform to most of these issues are usually deemed to be indecent, obscene, heretical, blasphemous, treasonous or seditious to some category of users or the general public, most especially in a public library where users have access to them. To prevent selection decisions from becoming synonymous with endorsement of content, selection should be guided by policies. According to Reichman (1988), "selection policies" should balance the concerns of a wide variety of groups and be carried out by trained professionals who "take into account, and work with the library community, and goals and objectives of the parent body" and maintain "a high tolerance for our national diversity."

On handling challenges of censorship in library collections, the American Library Association (2012) provided extensive practical information on this. It contains extensive information to help develop appropriate policies, handle challenges, and operate the library in accordance with First Amendment Rights. One of the most important things to remember is to be prepared and not wait until when faced with a challenge to devise a

strategy! Libraries will need to plan ahead, have guidelines in place, and make sure everyone who works in the library understands these procedures. Library boards and school officials should be reminded of the procedures and policies regarding Intellectual Freedom at least once a year. In other words, ALA summarized that libraries need to: keep policies and procedures current; have a formal policy to handle complaints; have open lines of communication with local community leaders; communicate the library's position on intellectual freedom to the public; local, historic, or rare materials should be properly treated. They include gift items that might deserve special attention such as books by local authors, local photographs of historical interest, yearbooks from local schools, local newspapers of historical importance, and local memorabilia (ALA, 2012).

Related Studies on Censorship

Enang and Umoh (2017) examined the concept of censorship and its influence on publishing in Nigeria. It also outlined the challenges of censorship on publishing in Nigeria and proffered. The author recommended among others that professional censors should be employed as acquisition editors in book publishing outfits and the security of journalists should be guaranteed especially as they are recognised as the fourth estate of the realm that has a duty to report facts as objectively as possible.

Yaya et al (2013) discusses censorship and the challenges of Library services delivery in Nigeria. The paper raised concerns about current librarian practices and library censorship processes which can effectively censor library collections from within. In managing the library and its services, the librarian should promote inclusion and should not discriminate against any library user regardless of sex, ethnic group, nationality, social condition, religion or political opinions. The study concluded by calling on librarians to provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance to the user.

Dafiaghor (2011) discussed censorship in Nigeria and brought to the fore, its historical development, various conceptions, purpose, various methods by which it may be carried out, challenges, controversies, legal guidelines, and its relation to the Nigerian society. The author concluded that censorship is meant to protect the Nigeria institutions involving family, church and the government as any effect on any would definitely affect the others because they go hand-in-hand. The author emphasized that though there are numerous challenges on censorship, however, it was

recommended that the challenges should be given priority, as the wrong information digested could cause a lot of havoc to the Nigerian society just like any other society in the world. The author also pointed out that, censorship is more needed now than never before, especially with the internet development and the concept of intellectual freedom which are gaining weight. It is not every information that is needed, thus censorship, when carried out adequately would help focus individuals' attention on necessary information rather than volume of information.

Curry (2001) reported that 11 content types are likely to be challenged: profanity, sexuality, religion/witchcraft, violence/horror, rebellion, racism/sexism, substance use/abuse, suicide/death, crime, crude behaviour, and depressing/negative tone. Sexuality and profanity were the two content types most noted in challenges. Other studies resulted in similar findings (Dillon & Williams, 1994). From 2001 to 2009, ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (ALA 2010) reported several content types—sexually explicit material, offensive language, unsuited to age group, violence, homosexuality, anti-family, and religious viewpoints—incurring the most challenges.

The analysis and synthesis of the available related studies revealed that they either addressed the issue about concept of censorship, its influence on publishing and outlined the challenges of censorship on publishing. Some others looked at censorship challenges to library services delivery, and of course others identified the content types that are likely to be challenged in the libraries. However, it is glaring that these available studies seemed to ignore the challenges of censorship and other print materials in the Nigerian public libraries. In addition, while other studies specifically focused other types of libraries, the current study focused mainly on public libraries. This is an indication that studies such as this are rare in the Nigerian public library context. Hence, the study examined censorship challenges to books in selected public libraries in South-West Nigeria.

Research Design

A survey design was used in this study that sought censorship challenges to books in some selected public libraries in South West Nigeria.

The survey design was considered appropriate in this study as it allows the use of questionnaire as a data collection instrument in order to be able to reached out to sizeable sample.

Population of the Study

The target population of the study consists of librarians in the Osun State Library Board, Ogun State Library Board and Oyo State Library Board. According to library record from these three state library boards, the total number of librarians as at the time this study was conducted in Oyo State Library Board is 12, Osun State Library Board 10, Ogun State Library Board is 12. These give a total population of 34 librarians.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Total Enumerative sampling method was adopted for the study. Total enumeration was considered the most suitable method because it has been postulated that it is the best method when the population is limited (Creswell, 2014). These 34 librarians selected through total enumeration represent the sample for the study.

Data Collection Instruments

The instrument used for data collection in the study was a questionnaire designed by the researcher. It was titled "Questionnaire on censorship challenges to books in Nigerian public libraries". Questionnaire has been known to be one of the most common research instruments especially among student researchers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections from A and B. The section B was sub-divided into parts. This comprised of 5 parts with each focusing on each variables of the study which includes; perception of librarians about censorship in the library, type of books been censored, how many challenges the library has received, reasons why such books were censored, actions taken by the library in response to challenges. The questionnaire contained both the open and closed ended items.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

In order to ensure content and construct validity mechanism, the questionnaire instrument was given to two Library and Information Science (LIS) researchers for scrutiny and expertise judgment with the view of checking the appropriateness of language to enable it measure what it was supposed to measure before its eventual administration. The questionnaire was modified, reworded and re-structured based on the suggestions by the experts. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using test-retest reliability method of two weeks interval. This involved administering the same questionnaire instrument to the same set of respondents on two different occasions at two weeks interval. The data collected on two different occasions was correlated and the overall reliability returned an $r = 0.91$. This was considered high enough and reliable for use in the study (Kothari, 2013).

Data Collection Procedure

The copies of questionnaire on censorship challenges to books in public libraries was administered to the respondents by the researcher. The copies of the questionnaires were administered when librarians were in their various offices because it was considered the best time they could be easily reached. The respondents were asked to fill and return the copies of questionnaire given to them immediately. However, some that could not return the questionnaire immediately were asked to return it later. The entire 34 copies of questionnaire administered were returned, properly filled and good for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the field was analyzed using descriptive statistics of simple percentage and frequency count. These two methods were adopted because of their relevance to analyse the type of data collected since it has been postulated that the type of data analysis method chosen to analyse data in a study is usually determined by the nature and types of data collected (Creswell, 2014; Kothari, 2013).

Results

Demographic Information of respondents

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by gender

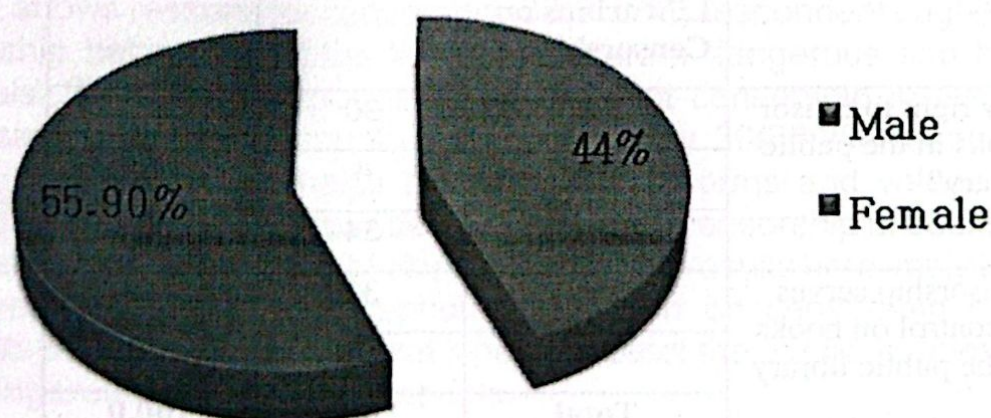


Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by gender. It is clear from the table that the majority of the respondents were female, 19(55.9%), while 15(44.1%) of the respondents were male

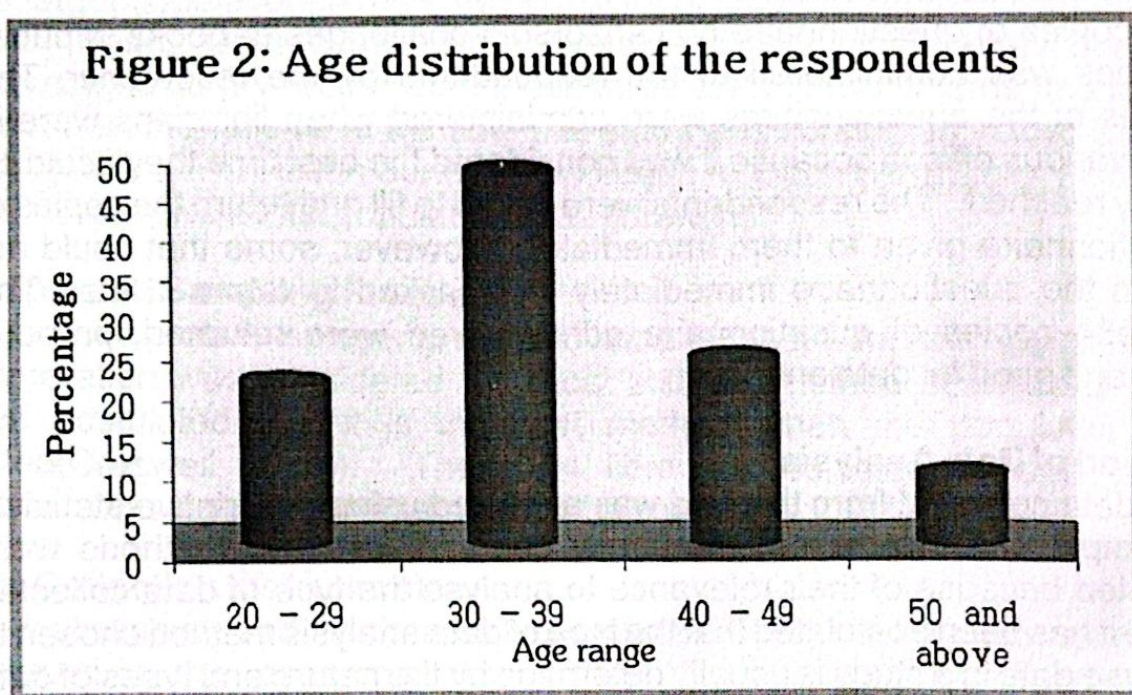


Figure 2 above shows the distribution of the respondents with respect to age, it ranged between 20 and 50 years and above. The majority of the respondents, 16(47.1%) were between the age range of 30 and 39 years, 8(23.5%) respondents are between 40 and 49 years. Others, 7(20.6%) respondents had their age ranged between 20 – 29 years and 3(8.8%) respondents had their age ranged between 50 years and above.

Table 1: Perception of Librarians on Censorship (n = 34)

Items	Perception of Librarians on Censorship	Frequency	Percentage
It is right to censor books in the public library?	Yes	30	88.2
	No	4	11.8
	Total	34	100.0
Censorship serves as control on books in the public library	Yes	32	94.1
	No	2	5.9
	Total	34	100.0
Censorship is an integral function of librarians in the public library	Yes	31	91.2
	No	3	8.8
	Total	34	100.0

From the table 1, 30(88.2%) respondents agreed that it is right to censor books in the public library and 32(94.1%) respondents indicated that censorship serve as control on books in the public libraries. Furthermore, 31(91.2%) respondents agreed that censorship is an integral function of librarians in the public library. The results here imply majorly censorship serve as control on books in the public libraries.

Table 2: Reasons for censorship (n =34)

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	Censorship helps protect the library users from dangerous and harmful materials	22 64.7%	9 26.5%	3 8.8%	-	3.56	0.660
2	Censorship in the public libraries safeguard the community from controversy	20 58.8%	11 32.4%	2 5.9%	1 2.9%	3.47	0.748
3	Censorship helps maintain the norms and values of the society	15 44.1%	15 44.1%	4 11.8%	-	3.32	0.684
4	Censorship restricts public libraries users from having free access to useful information	9 26.5%	8 23.5%	11 32.4%	6 17.6%	2.59	1.076
5	Censorship of books in the public libraries encroaches on the right of individuals	12 35.3%	9 26.5%	11 32.4%	2 5.9%	2.91	0.965

Table 2 shows reasons for censorship. 33(91.2%) respondents agreed that censorship helps protect the library users from dangerous and harmful materials. 31(91.2%) respondents agreed that censorship in the public library safeguard the community from controversy. 30(88.2%) respondents agreed that censorship helps to maintain the norms and values of the society. And 21(61.8%) respondents agreed that censorship of books in the library encroaches on the right of individuals. The results here imply that the major reason from the perception of librarian on censorship of book materials in public libraries is that it helps protect the public libraries users from dangerous and harmful materials

Table 3: Category of Books/Other Print Materials Being Censoring in Public Libraries (n = 34)

S/N	Books with Censorship Issues	*Frequency	Percentage
1	Materials that contains sexually explicit contents	28	82.4
2	Content and storyline unsuitable for children	23	67.6
3	Disgusting books and books with vulgar language	25	73.5
4	Books containing anti -ethnic and racist issues	25	73.5
5	Books that are sensitive to National issues and are threat to national security	28	82.4
6	Books that are morally objectionable to the various cultural norms	26	76.5
7	Books that can stir up religious crisis	29	85.3
8	Books that does not support the current political structure	24	70.6

Table 3 shows category of books with censor issues. Out of 34 respondents, 29(85.3%) indicated book that can stir up religious crisis while 28(82.4%) indicated materials that contains sexually explicit contents. In addition, 28(82.4%) indicated books that are sensitive to national issues and are threat to national security. Furthermore, 26(76.5%) indicated books that are morally objectionable to various cultural norms. Also 25(73.5) indicated disgusting books and books with vulgar language and 25(73.5) indicated books containing anti-ethnic and racist issues and 24(70.6) indicated books that does not support the current political structure and 23(67.6) indicated contents and storyline unsuitable for children. These results imply that categories of book censored in public libraries are majorly books that can stir up religious crisis, materials that contain sexually explicit contents and books that are sensitive to National issues and are threat to national security.

Table 4: Handling censorship complaints in public libraries (n = 34)

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	The library should have a formal policy to handle censor complaints from the library users	22 64.7%	12 35.3%	-	-	3.65	0.485
2	There should be open lines of communication with local community leaders	13 38.2%	15 44.1%	6 17.6%	-	3.21	0.729
3	Communicate the library's position on intellectual freedom to the public and public library users	22 64.7%	11 32.4%	1 2.9%	-	3.62	0.551
4	Withdraw such books from the library stock	10 29.4%	15 44.1%	5 14.7%	4 11.8%	2.91	0.965
5	Place age restrictions on some books	10 29.4%	12 35.3%	7 20.6%	5 14.7%	2.76	1.103

Table 4 shows ways of handling censorship complaints in public library. The results indicated that 34(100%) respondents agreed that the library should have a formal policy to handle censor complaints from the library users. A total of 28(82.3%) respondents indicated that there should be open lines of communication with local community leaders and 33(97.1%) respondents agreed that communicating the library's position on intellectual freedom to the public and public library users is necessary. These results imply that the major ways identified are that public libraries should have a formal policy to handle censor complaints from the library users and also communicating the library's position on intellectual freedom to the public library users.

Table 5: Perception on Procedures and Policy Guiding Public Library Censorship Decisions (n=34)

Does your library have a policy guiding censorship decisions?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	88.2
No	4	11.8
Total	34	100.0

Table 5 shows policy guiding libraries censorship decisions. Majority of the respondents, 30(88.2%) indicated that libraries have a policy guiding its censorship decisions.

Table 6 Frequency of Policy update

How often does your library update their policy	Frequency	Percentage
Every 6 Months	0	0
Yearly	30	88.2
Bi-Annually	0	0
Others	4	11.8

Table 6 shows how often library update their policy. A total of 30 respondents (88.2%) of the respondents indicated that the policy is updated yearly. However, 4 respondents (11.8%) indicated others perhaps this may be because this same percentage initially indicated their library did not have any policy guiding censorship in their libraries.

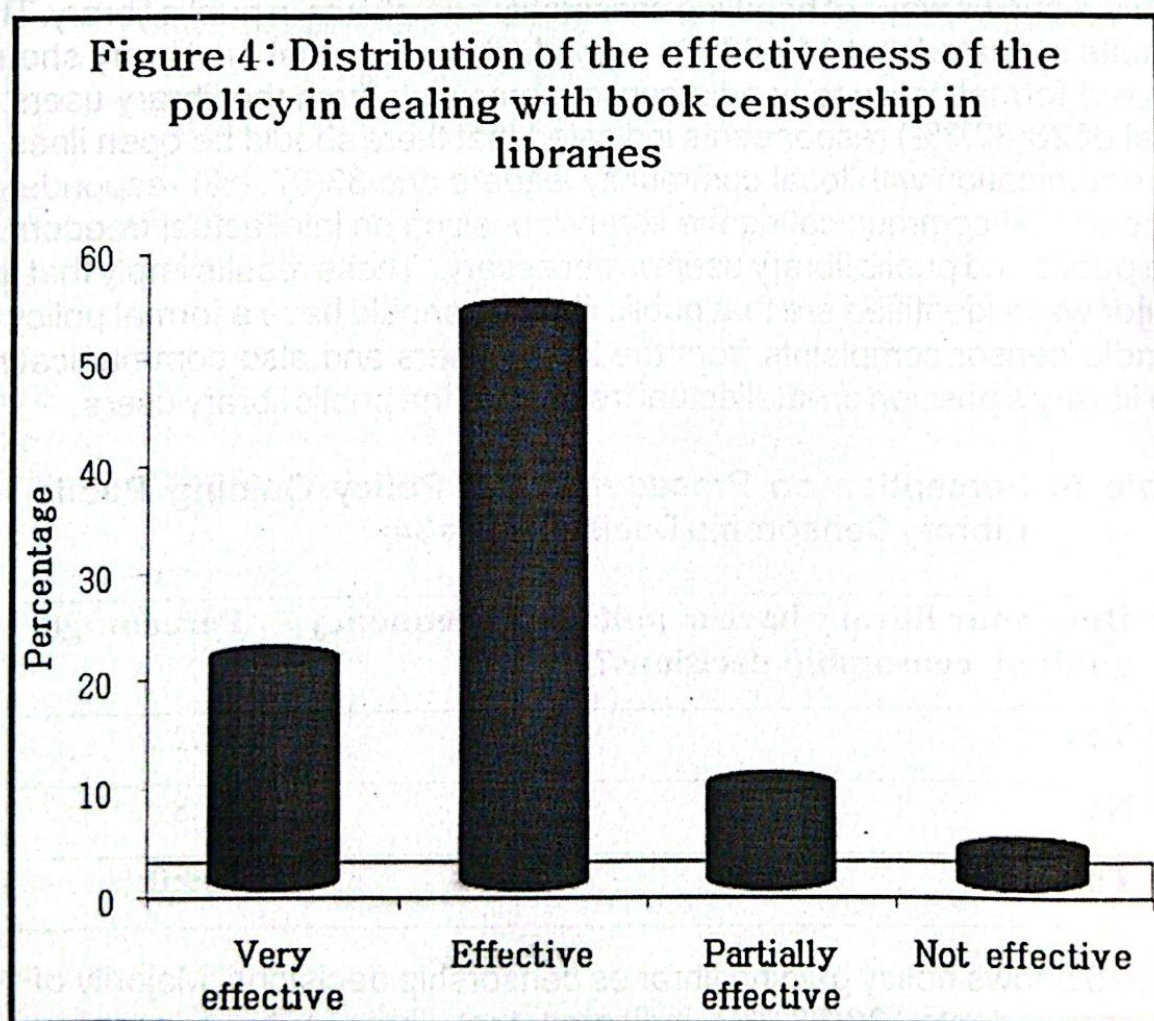


Figure 3 shows how effective the policy helped in dealing with censorship in libraries. 18(52.9%) indicated that the policy is effective in dealing with censorship issues in the library. 7(20.6%) indicated that the policy is very effective in dealing with censorship issues in the library, also 3(8.8%) are partially effective while 1(2.9%) are not effective at all.

Discussion of Findings

The result on the perception of librarians on censorship reveals that majority censorship serve as control on books in the public libraries. The result is supported by the finding by Dafiaghor (2011) whose study revealed that censorship is meant to protect the Nigeria institutions involving family, church and the government from reading books and information materials that could have any negative effect on any of the three institutions. The result is also in line with the definition given by Fieser (2017) who pointed out that censorship is the suppression of free speech, often on the grounds that an act of expression harms or offends the public. Meaning that the act of controlling books in the public libraries as indicated in this study is to prevent the public of being harmed or offended by reading such books.

The result on reasons for censorship indicate that the major reason from the perception of librarian on censorship of book materials in public libraries is that it helps protect the users from dangerous and harmful materials. Byne (2004) earlier stated that censorship prevent the misuse of library materials. Similarly, the definitions given by Fieser (2017), Dafiaghor (2011) and Lau (2009) testified to the fact that the rationale behind censorship is protection. That confirmed the current finding in this study.

The results in this study also revealed that the categories of book censor in public libraries are majorly books that can stir up religious crisis, materials that contains sexually explicit contents and books that are sensitive to National issues and are threat to national security. Packard (1999); Rosen (2005) support this finding by indicating that there are many Internet sites that identified the most commonly banned books due to community disapproval. Curry (2001) and ALA (2010) earlier identification of types of book such as covering profanity, sexuality, religion/witchcraft, violence/horror, rebellion, racism/sexism, substance use/abuse, suicide/death, crime, crude behaviour, and depressing/negative tone as categories been censored correspond to and lend credence to the current finding in this study.

The major ways identified in this study through which public libraries can handle complaints on censorship are putting formal policy in place to handle

cancel complaints from the library users and communicate the library's position on intellectual freedom to the public and public library users. The result is supported by Reichman (1988) who indicated that selection policies should be formulated to balance the concerns of a wide variety of groups and be carried out by trained professionals who "take into account, and work with the library community, to achieve the goals and objectives of the parent body" and maintain "a high tolerance for our national diversity."

Conclusion

This study has examined the censorship challenges to books in selected public libraries in south-west Nigeria. So far, the result generally has indicated that censorship in public libraries is necessary. The results also demonstrate strong perception of librarians on censorship and how it has helped in restricting harmful and offensive material from the public libraries. To comply with censorship issue, the study identified material such as disgusting books and books with vulgar language, materials that contains sexually explicit contents, books that can stir up religious crisis as categories needed to be censored in the public libraries.

Limitations of the study

Despite covering three public libraries in the South West Nigeria, this study has some shortcomings. These include limited number of librarians in each public library. The librarians in some public library are not up to 10 and some are just 4 in numbers. As a result, it was difficult to get respondents to fill the questionnaire. This is because the limited librarians available are very busy and some of them were not even available when the copies of the questionnaire were distributed due some personal issues.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that the government should give support and assistance to support censorship policy in public libraries. Also, public libraries should frequently update their policy and enforce the policy whenever censorship issues arise.

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