

# Personality Variables as Determinants of Cataloguing Performance of Librarians in Nigerian Universities

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## Abstract

This study investigated the personality variables of age, gender, experience, and subject background as determinants the cataloguing performance of librarians in Nigerian universities. A descriptive survey method was adopted in the study with the use of Cataloguers' Personality Variables Questionnaire (CPVQ) and Cataloguers' Practical Cataloguing Test (CPCT) designed by the researcher to collect data from 304 librarians in eighteen (18) university libraries from the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria. Descriptive statistic method was used to analyse data, answer research questions and test the hypotheses. The study revealed that each of the personal variables significantly influenced the cataloguing performance of librarians. The study, therefore, recommended, among other things, that library authorities should deploy librarians to the cataloguing section of the library based on the appropriate personal variables that are most suitable for achieving cataloguing efficiency among cataloguing librarians.

## Background to the Study

This study is a descriptive survey type because it described the relationship between personality variables of librarians as determinants of their performance in cataloguing and classification of books in Nigerian university libraries. The world is so rich in information that we continue to witness information explosion. This can be observed in the high rate at which people seek information to access and utilize for diverse purposes. Information/data is recorded in print (book), electronic (e-resource) and oral (verbal) resources. One of the cardinal responsibilities of the library, therefore, is to select, acquire, organize and make the library resources available to the users. The other responsibility is to ensure that librarians catalogue the materials correctly so that library clientele will have unfettered access to the resources in the library catalogues and on the shelves. This researcher however observed that some librarians catalogue some library books wrongly (Omoniyi, 2008).

Scholars have argued that librarians catalogue library books wrongly due to different reasons (Benge, 1979; Beghto, 1986; Avran, 1989; Chapman, 1990; Omoniyi, 2002; Agaja, Adeniji and Salma, 2003; and Ogundipe, 2005).

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Nevertheless, this researcher investigated if there was any relationship between personality variables of age, gender, experience and subject background as determinants of cataloguing performance of librarians in Nigerian universities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study was carried out primarily to investigate the personality variables (age, gender, experience, subject background), of librarians as determinants of their cataloguing performance in Nigerian university libraries. The specific purposes of the study were to investigate:

- (i) the general performance of librarians in book cataloguing.
- (ii) whether personality variables of age, gender, experience, and subject background influenced the performance of librarians in book cataloguing.

### **Research Questions**

On the basis of the background to the problem and purposes of the study that have been highlighted, the specific research questions formulated to guide this study were:

1. What is the general level of performance of librarians in book cataloguing?
2. Do personality variables of age, gender, experience, and subject background influence the cataloguing performance of librarians?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: there is no significant difference in the cataloguing performance of librarians based on age.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>: there is no significant difference in the cataloguing performance of librarians based on gender.
- Ho<sub>3</sub>: there is no significant difference in the cataloguing performance of librarians based on experience.
- Ho<sub>4</sub>: there is no significant difference in the cataloguing performance of librarians based on subject specialisation.

### **Literature Review**

Bowman (2003) defined cataloguing as a process of preparing a list of books by librarians. If library books are catalogued accurately, users will be able to locate the materials through author, title and subject(s) coverage which the Cataloguer has assigned to each of the library resources.

According to Kumar (1991), cataloguing is a process and product of a systematic description of printed and non-printed information resources in the library to enable library users to have unhindered access to the materials. In

librarianship, cataloguing error, crisis, or discrepancy arises if the librarian assigns the wrong subject(s) heading to a book. When a cataloguer assigns a subject that is incorrect to a book, this will lead to grouping the text into a wrong class and place on the library shelves. Both the library and its users suffer when books are wrongly catalogued by the cataloguing librarians. Omoniyi (1997) is of the view that a book that carries wrong subject(s) heading is as good as being lost because the target clientele will not be able to locate the material where it is supposed to be found in the library catalogues and on the library shelves.

In an empirical study of the cataloguing performance of selected librarians in Kwara State, Adio (1997) reported that the respondents often exhibited some personal characteristics that influenced their cataloguing performance. The researcher, therefore, submitted that in addition to the librarians' cognitive ability, a study of some selected personality variables will enhance making accurate predictions of the cataloguing performance of librarians.

Coon (2000) asserted that a person's personality is better understood in terms of two-dimensional traits/variables that are not correlated with each other. According to Sdorow and Rickabaugh (2000) and Aboujaoude (2017), traits refer to co-variant sets of behavioural acts which can be deduced from or associated with human behaviour that can influence the individual's behaviour. In a study on the influence of personality variables on human performance, Mowaiye-Fagbemi (1999) asserted that a personality variable is either biologically innate or environmentally induced. She identified gender as one of the personal variables that are innate to human beings. Abdullahi (2000) opined that gender is an important index of human life and the dichotomy is an important factor in human experiences. Eckes (1994) asserted that all known cultures specify that Male/Female distinction is fundamental because it associates women and men with different sets of behavioural expectations, attitudes, and patterns. Ibukun and Oyewole (1997) carried out a study among selected civil servants in Ilorin to determine personal factors that influenced their job performance. The study revealed that age, educational qualification, gender, and work experience influenced the way the respondents performed their job.

A lot of research that has been carried out to determine the relative influence of gender on the achievement and job performance of individuals in different occupations and situations showed lack of unanimity in the findings, which suggests that research is still inconclusive in this area of personality variables. For examples, Omoniyi (2004) reported in a study on five-year-old children in play situations that boys were more exploratory and more active in overcoming obstacles than girls. Similarly, Abdullahi (2000) reported that male subjects were superior to females in tasks that required shifting attention and rapid adaptation to changing stimuli. However, Kayode (2002) reported that gender differences favoured girls in reading comprehension performance, particularly, at adolescent age. Coon (2000) asserted that females perform

higher in verbal and reading comprehension tasks than their male counterparts because of the presence of more hormone estrogen in females.

Hildenbrand (1989) reported that fewer men were cataloguers because they considered it as less prestigious and cataloguers were accorded lower status than librarians in the other sections of the library. According to Harris, Michell, Contey (1985) and Beghtol (1986), more female students registered for cataloguing course than any other aspects of library science in American Library Association accredited schools.

Age is a biologically induced index of human personality. It refers to a state or fact of being in existence over a period of time. As in the case of gender, research reports on the issue of age and job performance and effectiveness of individuals have resulted in different opinions and assumptions.

In a study among teachers in Ondo State Nigeria, Ibukun and Oyewole (1997) established a positive correlation between the age and job performance of teachers. The researchers adduced three reasons for the influence of age job performance and satisfaction of respondents:

1. A strongly dissatisfied young employee may decide to change job frequently in search of fulfillment in other jobs than what an old employee would want to do.
2. A sense of reality sets in more quickly as an employee grows older in age and this may result in the decision to give up any search for fulfillment somewhere else.
3. Older employees have more opportunities to find fulfillment and self-actualization in their jobs than new entrant young employees.

In a study to determine the relative effects of age on job performance and attitude of workers, Babalola (1992) reported that old age often brings greater competence, self-confidence, esteem, and a higher level of responsibilities because it is a point where a person may feel a greater sense of accomplishment than what the young person would want to do. Omoshewo (2003) established in a study on the relationship between age and the intellectual/academic abilities of some selected secondary school students in Kwara State Nigeria that a positive correlation existed between intellectual/academic abilities of the respondents and their age. The researcher argued that a person's intellectual or academic abilities increase or improve as one increases in age. This finding, however, tends to negate Coon (2000) who reported that as one gets older, his intellectual/academic abilities also decrease. Sprebler (1987) and Sparrow (1988) independently investigated the personal factors that influenced the job effectiveness and productivity of factory workers in different places. The summary of the combined findings of the studies showed that workers in their middle age exhibited more efficient though lower job performance level than workers in older age groups. The research asserted

that of about 90 years of age, for example, senility is more likely to set in and impede the job effectiveness of an individual.

Experience is used in this study to mean the knowledge or skill that an employee has gained over time in the performance of a task. As one of the environmentally induced personality variables, experience is one of the means by which a person seeks answers or solutions to given problems or tasks. Ogunleye (2000) argued that a person with little or no experience of a phenomenon would want to consult someone who has more experience about such phenomenon. Experience, therefore, tends to be a prerequisite to skill and effectiveness in job performance. Ogundele (1995) posited that experience connotes attitudes and skills that a person has acquired through tasks or events which he/she has previously undertaken many times.

In a study about the influence of selected teachers' variables on the teaching of secondary school students in Abeokuta, Nigeria, Ogbonna (1998) showed that the more a professional stay on the job, the more he becomes skilled and perfect in the techniques of going about the job. This finding is a re-echo of the axiom: "experience is the best teacher" and it tends to agree with Omoniyi (2004) who submitted that a professional is more efficient and effective as he stays longer on his profession because he would have learnt more about and how to overcome any difficulties encountered while performing the tasks.

In a similar study to determine the factors that could influence the job performance of employees in establishments, Woodward (1997) found that length of service was a determinant of employees' job performance because the more experienced an employee has on the job, the more effective and efficient he/her becomes on the job. Ogundele (1995) measured selected teachers' teaching performance against their teaching experience. The study revealed that a highly qualified teacher without the appropriate teaching experience did not measure up to the required performance standard. The researcher emphasized that experience is a stronger determinant of an employee's job performance effectiveness than his/her academic skill can solely achieve.

Subject background and subject specialisation are used synonymously in this study to mean a particular subject or branch of it. That is, for a person to qualify as a subject specialist, he/she must have attained high standard of expertise and skill through training in a particular subject area, discipline or occupation. Omoniyi (2002) carried out a study among two groups of librarians. The first group was given a reading exercise in their subject fields while the second was tested in disciplines in which they had no previous knowledge. The study showed that those who were exposed to reading in their subject fields performed better than those exposed to reading in other subjects. Similarly, it was discovered that the attitude of readers was more favourable to the texts in which they had subject background than those who were exposed to texts in other disciplines.

In a study among selected students of the University of Ilorin, Olajide (1989) reported that subject background would not essentially enhance an individual's effective performance in reading-related tasks. Rather, reading comprehension skills were stronger determinants of effective performance of the students in reading-related tasks. This view tends to negate Nuttal (1988) who reported that reader's familiarity with a text subsumes both the reading skills and subject background that individuals exhibit in reading-related tasks. In other words, the researcher found in his study that respondents performed better in texts that were most related to their subject fields as a result of familiarity with the texts. Wood head (1997) and Ogundipe (2005) opined that a generalist librarian with long years of work experience in book cataloguing would perform more effectively in book cataloguing task than a non-experienced subject specialist librarian. Alao (1997) reported that neither experience nor subject specialisation alone was significantly related to librarians' performance in the cataloguing of library books. What one could deduce to be the collective findings of research work on the influence of subject background on the performance of individuals in reading-based tasks is that subject specialisation is so negligible to be studied in Isolation. Therefore, other personality variables should also be included in such investigations.

## **Research Methodology**

This study is a descriptive survey type because it described the influence of personality variables of age, gender, experience, and subject background on the cataloguing performance of librarians. Stratification method was used to sample 304 cataloguing librarians from federal, state and private University libraries across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria (Omoniyi, 2008). Researcher-designed Cataloguers' Personality Variables Questionnaire (CPVQ) was used for data collection from respondents. Section A of the instrument consisted of four major items that solicited basic information about age, gender, work experience as a cataloguer and subject background of each respondent. Section B focused on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor cataloguing behaviour of the respondents. Each cataloguing behaviour consisted of ten items with a five-point Likert scale response pattern. The second instrument was the Cataloguers Practical Cataloguing Test (CPCT) which consisted of five passages. Each passage featured one creative question on practical cataloguing and respondents were requested to formulate appropriate subject(s) heading to each passage. Data from CPVQ were analyzed by simple frequency counts and percentage distribution technique to provide information on the number of old/young, male/female, experienced/less experienced, generalist/specialist cataloguing librarians. Means and Standard Deviation Statistic was used to answer the research

question one while t-test statistic was used for research question two and the hypotheses (1-4).

## Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analysed and results presented in tables for easy interpretation.

### *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

The demographic information about the background personality variables of the respondents is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age, gender, work experience and subject background**

Variables	Group	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage difference
Age. 39 years and below	Young	141	46.3	7.3
	Old	163	53.6	
Gender	Male	161	52.9	5.9
	Female	143	47.0	
Experience: 5 years and below	Less experienced	159	52.3	4.7
	Experienced	145	47.6	
Subject background	Generalist	159	52.3	4.7
	Specialist	145	47.6	

The data in Table (1) above show that 141(46.3%) of the cataloguing librarians sampled were considered young for being below 40 years of age and 163(53.6%) were considered old for being above 40 years of age. The percentage difference between the two groups of cataloguers was 7.3. As regards the gender of the respondents, 161(52.9%) were male and 143(47.6%) were female cataloguers. The 159(52.3%) respondents had less than 5 years of work experience as cataloguing librarians while 14 (47.6%) had a minimum of 5 years of experience as cataloguers. Similarly, 159(52.3%) of the respondents were generalist librarians while 145(47.6%) others were specialists for having obtained a university degree qualification in at least a subject field in addition to library science. For each category of respondents, the percentage difference (7.3%), (5.9%), (4.7%) and (4.7%) respectively suggested that the pattern of population distribution for each group in the libraries sampled was by chance and not the norm.

## Research Questions

Question 1: What is the general level of performance of librarians in book cataloguing?

**Table 2: Summary of general level of performance of librarians in book cataloguing**

N	Max. scores obtainable	Means	SD	Decision
304	25	5.03	3.705	Poor

The results of the analysis in Table (2) show that the mean score of librarians in book cataloguing was 5.05 out of a maximum obtainable score of 25. By this score, we can say that the general performance of librarians in book cataloguing was poor.

Question 2: Do personality variables of age, gender, experience and subject background influence the cataloguing performance of librarians?

**Table 3: Summary of librarians' personality variables over their cataloguing performance**

Variables	N	Maximum score obtainable	Score obtained	Score percentage differential
Old	163	25	13	
Young	141	25	12	1
Male	161	25	15	
Female	143	25	10	5
Less experienced	159	25	10	
Experienced	145	25	15	5
Generalist	159	25	11	
Specialist	145	25	14	3

The data in Table (3) show that 163 old cataloguers and 141 young cataloguers scored 13 and 12 respectively from a total of 25 scores each. Male cataloguers obtained 15 scores and female cataloguing librarians scored 10. The less experienced cataloguers obtained 10 scores while the experienced ones scored 15. The generalist cataloguing librarians scored 11 and the specialist one obtained 14 scores. The score differential of 1, 5, 5, and 3 per each category of the groups appeared to be by chance rather than the norm.

### Testing the Hypotheses (1-4)

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the cataloguing performance of librarians based on age.

**Table 4: Comparison of t-test results of old and young librarians in cataloguing performance**

Variable	N	Means	SD	DF	t-cal	P	t-Crit	Decision
Old	163	5.48	3.66	302	2.268	.05	.024	Ho1 Rejected
Young	141	4.52	3.71					

The above Table 4 shows that t-calculated is 2.268 and t-critical is .024. The t-calculated (2.268) is greater than t-critical (.02), the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) was thus rejected. That is, a significant difference existed between the cataloguing performance of old and young librarians, with the old librarians performing better.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference in the cataloguing performance of librarians based on gender

**Table 5: Comparison of t-test results of male and female librarians' performance in book cataloguing**

Variable	N	Means	SD	DF	P	T-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	161	5.46	3.88	302	.05	2.198	.032	Reject $H_{02}$
Female	143	4.55	3.45					

The results in Table 5 show that the t-calculated is 2.158 and t-critical is .032. Because the t-calculated (2.158) is greater than the t-critical (.032), the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) was rejected. That is, there was a significant difference in the cataloguing performance of male and female librarians, with the male librarians performing better.

$H_{03}$ : There is no significant difference in the cataloguing performance of less experienced librarians.

**Table 6: Comparison of t-test results of less experienced and experienced librarians in book cataloguing**

Variable	N	Means	SD	DF	P	T-cal	t-crit	Decision
Less experienced	159	5.52	3.75	302	.05	2.435	.015	Reject $H_{03}$
Experienced	145	4.50	3.59					

In Table 6, t-calculated is 2.435 and t-critical is .015 at 302 degrees of freedom and .05 level of significance. Since t-calculated (2.435) is greater than t-critical (.015), the null hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ) was rejected. Therefore, a significant difference existed between the cataloguing performance of less experienced and experienced librarians with the experienced librarians performing better.

$H_{04}$ : There is no significant difference in the cataloguing performance of generalist and specialist librarians.

**Table 7: Comparison of t-test results of generalist and specialist librarians in book cataloguing**

Variable	N	Means	SD	DF	P	T-cal	t-crit	Decision
Generalist	159	5.01	3.709	302	.05	.896	.031	Reject H <sub>4</sub>
Specialist	145	4.06	3.714					

In Table 7, t-cal is .896 and t-crit is .031. Since t-cal (.896) is greater than t-crit (.031), the null hypothesis (H<sub>04</sub>) was rejected. Therefore, there was a significant difference in the cataloguing performance of generalist and specialist librarians with the specialist librarians performing better.

### Discussion of Key Findings

This study has investigated the influence of personality variables of age, gender, and experience and subject background on the cataloguing performance of librarians in eighteen (18) University libraries selected in the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria. One of the findings of the study, arising from Table 4, hypothesis 4, revealed that t-cal = 2.158, and t-crit = -.032. Since t-cal (2.158) is greater than t-crit (.024), the hypothesis was rejected thereby establishing a significant difference between the cataloguing performance of old and young librarians with the old librarians performing better than young librarians in book cataloguing. The finding seems to be at variance with Sprebler (1987) and Sparrow (1988) who found that workers in their middle age exhibit more efficient though lower job performance level than workers in the old age group. The finding, however, seems to be in tandem with Ibukun and Oyewole (1997) who found that old age often brings greater competence in job performance, self-confidence and more opportunities to fulfillment and self-actualisation in the jobs.

Another finding shown in Table 5, hypothesis 5 affirmed that a significant difference existed between the cataloguing performance of male and female librarians with the male librarians performing better than their female counterpart. This was based on the statistical analysis of data utilised in the study in which the t-cal = 2.158 and t-crit = .032. Since t-cal (2.158) was greater than the t-crit (.032), the hypothesis was rejected in favour of male librarians. This finding confirms Omoniyi (2004) who found that male employees often perform better than the female ones in tasks that require reasoning. While Kayode (2002) found that girls performed better than boys in a reading comprehension test, Ogunkola (2002) reported that the cognitive behaviour and performance of male and female students in reading tasks were the same.

On the basis of experience at work, the finding showed that significant difference existed between less experienced and experienced librarians in book cataloguing with the less experienced librarians performing better than the

experienced ones. According to Table 6, hypothesis 6,  $t\text{-cal} = 2.435$  and  $t\text{-crit} = .015$ . With  $t\text{-cal}$  (2,435) being greater than  $t\text{-crit}$  (.015), the hypothesis was rejected. This finding seems to agree with Edom (2010) who did not find any significant difference in the less experience and experienced academic staff in their use of ICT. According to a finding by Sanjebad and Jahad (2014), significant difference existed between less experienced and experienced mobile learners in favour of the experienced learners. At the level of less experienced librarians, however, the finding tends to negate Omoniyi (2004) who found that the more experienced an employee is on the job, the more effective and efficient he/she would become in the performance of the job. Then finding also contradicts Ogundele (1995) who reported that experience alone did not make his respondents efficient in the performance of a job. The researcher, therefore, submitted that an employee would perform better if the necessary skill is deployed in the performance of a given task. He, however, warned that an experienced worker would not necessarily be skillful in the performance of a job until the required knowledge might have been acquired and applied in the performance of the task. The combined implication of the findings in hypothesis 6 showed that it is both experience and the required skill that can enhance the effective performance of a person on a job.

Furthermore, the remaining finding of the study revealed that a significant difference existed in the cataloguing performance of librarians on the basis of subject background in favour of specialist librarians thereby rejecting hypothesis 7. According to data analysis in Table 7,  $t\text{-cal} = .896$  and  $t\text{-crit} = .031$ . since  $t\text{-cal}$  (.896) is greater than  $t\text{-crit}$  (.031), hypothesis 7 was rejected in favour of the specialist librarians who performed better than the generalist librarians in book cataloguing. This finding tends to be in tandem with Omoniyi (1997) who asserts that subject specialisation makes it possible for librarians to catalogue books accurately because they will apply the background knowledge that they have in the discipline to catalogue the text. This finding also confirms Ogundipe (2005), Pflugner, Mattke and Maier (2014) who found that generalist users of ICT facilities and resources easily get bored and stressed more than the specialist users since the generalists are not yet used to spending a long time on ICT utilisation.

## **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings in this study, it is recommended that authorities charged with the responsibility to employ librarians for university libraries in particular and other large libraries, in general, should consider the calibre of librarians to be considered for the various sections of the library. What is to be considered before a librarian is posted to work in the cataloguing section of the library should be primarily the subject background of such librarian. This is because, by virtue of acquiring additional academic qualification in another discipline as an addition to Library and Information Science, such librarian will be academically and intellectually equipped to catalogue library books in the

subject in which he has a background more accurately than what a generalist librarian with academic qualification only in Library and Information Science can do. It is also recommended that Cataloguing Librarians should be equipped with the necessary modern cataloguing and classification resources and facilities for maximum efficiency in the performance of their cataloguing tasks. Training and re-training of Cataloguers to keep them abreast of current trends in cataloguing and classifying of library resources should be given a priority. Cataloguing Librarians regardless of personal variables should be given equal opportunities to prove their mettle as Cataloguers.

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