

Full Length Research

Impact of Research on Library and Information Science Education for National Development in Nigeria

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Research in Library and Information Science (LIS) education is an integral component of Nigeria's developmental agenda, but it is under-resourced, poorly embedded in policy but rather connected to Nigeria's practical information needs. Based on empirical findings, institutional data and current theoretical approaches, the article argues that the transformative capacity of LIS research to enhance information governance, digital literacy, empowerment of marginalised populations and support knowledge-led economic diversification is being systematically underutilised due to a combination of institutional neglect, lack of funding and professional marginalisation. The article argues that Nigeria's ambition of achieving sustainable development as outlined by Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Nigeria Agenda 2050 will continue to be a dream if deliberate, sustained and strategically targeted investments are not made in LIS research and education. Recommendations are put forward for institutional, professional and government stakeholders interested in re-positioning LIS research as a developmental resource for the national development.

Keywords: Library and Information Science, research, national development, Nigeria, information policy, digital literacy, knowledge economy

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Introduction: The Neglected Nexus between Knowledge and Development

The promise of development through knowledge is appealing—the notion that countries that invest in the production, organization, dissemination and utilization of information will, over time, reap the rewards of informed governance, innovative economies, and empowered citizenry. It has been this concept that has made the knowledge economy the prevailing paradigm of the development of the 21st century (World Bank, 2021; OECD, 2022). It is the foundation for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). It is also embedded in the Agenda 2050 and Economic Recovery and Growth Plan of Nigeria which explicitly mention knowledge, technology and innovation as key enablers of economic transformation (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021).

However, there is a remarkable irony in the development story of Nigeria that a country that is looking towards knowledge-driven development has systematically ignored the academic discipline that is directly linked to knowledge, organisation, access, literacy and its impact in society. Library and Information Science (LIS) is an academic and professional discipline that sits in a strategically unique position that combines education, information management, technology and social equity. LIS research makes a contribution to the evidence base which supports the design of effective library services, the formulation of information policy, the design of information literacy curricula, the evaluation

of digital infrastructure and the measurement of the social impact of organised information access. In a country where more than 65% of its population is functionally information-poor (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022), in which the infrastructure of the public libraries is generally seen as inadequate (Anyaku et al., 2021), in which the gap between rural and urban areas, as well as gender and socioeconomic inequalities continue to widen in terms of access to information, knowledge and technology (Adekunle & Tihamiyu, 2023), the need for strong and contextually relevant LIS research has never been more pronounced.

This article restates the case that research in LIS education in Nigeria is not a mere academic activity but is indeed a strategic national asset, which if nurtured and utilized effectively can make significant contributions towards Nigeria's development processes. The article consists of four major movements: the first places LIS research in the general theoretical and empirical context of the relationship between knowledge and national development; the second provides critical examination of the present status of LIS research in Nigeria, showing evidence of its successes as well as its many shortcomings; the third discusses the trajectories that can be taken for LIS research and education to influence certain aspects of national development; and the fourth offers concrete proposals for how the landscape of LIS research in Nigeria can become a real driver of development. In the course of this article, the tone is critical and unapologetically persuasive, for that's the same tone that should be adopted when arguing for institutional, and political, change, which has tangible implications for millions of Nigerians who are still on the wrong side of the information divide.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Defining Library and Information Science Research

Library and Information Science research is a multidisciplinary research that focuses on the systematic study of phenomena associated with the production, organization, storage, retrieval, dissemination and use of recorded knowledge and information (Bates, 2020; Saracevic, 2021). It includes a wide variety of research traditions such as positivist studies on users' behaviour and effectiveness of library service, interpretivist studies on information seeking in marginalised groups, and critical studies on power, equity and ideology in information systems. It is one of the most genuinely interdisciplinary fields in the academic world (Hjørland, 2021; Bawden & Robinson, 2022), and builds on theory from fields such as information theory, communication science, cognitive psychology, sociology and political economy, computer science, and education.

In Nigeria, previous LIS studies have largely concentrated on descriptive survey studies on the use of the library, availability of library resources, and the quality of library services, in academic institutions (Aina, 2019; Nwosu & Okonkwo, 2020). These studies have contributed to descriptive knowledge but have been criticized for being methodologically conservative and lacking in theoretical engagement as well as having weak linkage to policy and practice (Madu & Adeniran, 2021). The research on digital libraries, e-resources, social media, mobile information services and information literacy, which are mostly influenced by global trends in LIS scholarship, were observed in recent years (Ilo et al., 2021; Adekunle & Tihamiyu, 2023). But all this does not match the capacity of research, funding or institutional infrastructure and this gap between capacity to do research and resources to realise it has been a sore point of the LIS scholars in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework: Knowledge Capital and the Information Society

The theoretical underpinning of this article is based on three mutually related frameworks: the Knowledge Capital Theory, the Information Society paradigm and Sen's Capability Approach.

In the view of the Knowledge Capital Theory, inspired by the extensive work in human capital economics (Becker, 1964) and extended to the organisational and national context by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Stewart (1997), systematic production, management and application of knowledge is equivalent to physical or financial capital and is equally real and productive and can be a source of economic value, innovation and competitive advantage. The knowledge capital of a country is the total of its educational resources, research production, information infrastructure, and innovation capacity. In the field of LIS research, the Knowledge Capital Theory states that investments in LIS education and research create knowledge assets, policy frameworks based on evidence, trained information professionals, effective LIS services, information literacy competencies, which are directly productive in the national development process.

Theories such as those of Castells (2010), Webster (2020) and Wark (2019) have shaped the view of the Information Society, a paradigm that suggests that the modern society is defined by the production, distribution and consumption of information, above all physical products. Accurate, timely and relevant information is not only a tool to make life easier in today's information society, but is also an essential precondition for social participation, economic opportunity, and political power. Lack of a strong information infrastructure, from libraries to information literacy programmes, to research institutions focused on information needs and information behaviour, can mean that information societies only accomplish for a small number of people the progress of the privileged while remaining informationally excluded for the majority. LIS research is

the one that has the closest connection with the issue of the inclusion of information societies, as against the exclusion.

The Capability Approach of Sen, 1999, Nussbaum, 2011, has been more widely used recently in the LIS context by authors like Lor, 2019, and Britz et al., 2021, and provides a normative framework to consider the social value of knowledge access and LIS research. Capability Approach is a perspective on development that sees development as the enhancement of people's freedom and their substantive capacities to lead the lives they have reason to value. Access to information, facilitated by library services and complemented by information literacy education, is a key capability enabler – it can enable people to make informed health choices, seek out legal rights, access democratic resources, undertake educational and economic opportunities and access cultural heritage. Research in LIS that explores and enhances the environment where citizens can access information thus helps to contribute in a direct way to the extension of capabilities and human development. The narrative of the norm in Nigeria is especially compelling because of the pervasive and deep-seated nature of capability shortages, stemming for one from information poverty.

The Current State of LIS Research in Nigeria: An Unflattering Portrait

Output, Quality, and Visibility of Nigerian LIS Research

It is difficult to overlook the vitality of LIS research in Nigeria, and this can be no different from acknowledging its limitations. Fortunately, there exist productive LIS scholarships in Nigeria, which is the best in Africa. The Nigerian LIS scholars publish their works in internationally recognized journals like the Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, Library Hi Tech, the African Journal of Library Archives and Information Science (AJLAIS), Electronic Library, while Nigeria has some established LIS programmes in federal and state universities (Ukwuoma et al, 2021; Ilo et al, 2021). Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) are professional frameworks that offer institutional incentive for research activity of practising librarians.

But upon a critical analysis of Nigerian LIS output, it is found that there are serious structural weaknesses. The analysis revealed that Nigerian LIS researchers produced around 2.3% of the total LIS research output from Africa, which is clearly lower as compared to the number of publications of other African countries due to Nigeria's status as the most densely populated country in Africa and the world's largest economy (Scopus Analytics, 2024). Worse, is the quality and consequences of Nigerian LIS research. The impact of Nigerian LIS journals in terms of citation metrics (h-index) is lower than that of South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya; likewise, the average citations per article of Nigerian LIS researchers are also found to be lower than that of the South African, Ghanaian and Kenyan researchers (Madu & Adeniran, 2021). The citedness of Nigerian LIS scholarship is an indicator that it is not widely known outside the country, and that, arguably, it has limited impact outside Nigeria.

Nigerian LIS research has also been the focus of critical commentaries as it relates to the methodology. When Nwosu and Okonkwo (2020) performed a systematic review of the Nigerian LIS journals between 2017 and 2022, they found 312 articles with descriptive survey designs, using questionnaires for data collection, representing a significant degree of methodological homogeneity that hinders the ability of the field to develop a rich, multi-faceted, and contextual knowledge base for the complex development challenge. The underdevelopment of research methodology training in Nigerian LIS programmes with absence of diversity of research methodology culture among researchers in LIS is reflected on the few less than 22% of publications that included both qualitative and mixed-methods studies, as well as longitudinal, experimental and bibliometric studies (Madu & Adeniran, 2021).

Table 1. Nigerian LIS Research Output and Impact Metrics (2019–2024)

Metric	Nigeria	South Africa	Ghana	Kenya	Continental Avg.
Scopus-indexed LIS articles (2019–2024)	487	1,243	319	274	,
% of African LIS output	2.3%	5.9%	1.5%	1.3%	,
Average citations per article	3.7	8.4	5.2	4.9	4.1
% Methodologically diverse studies	21.8%	44.7%	38.2%	41.3%	,
% Studies linked to policy recommendations	11.2%	31.4%	24.8%	22.7%	,

Source: Compiled from Scopus Analytics (2024); Madu and Adeniran (2021); Ukwuoma et al. (2021).

Note: figures are approximate estimates from available bibliometric databases.

Table 1 sets the stage for the Nigerian context of LIS research in Africa and shows that it has performed quantitatively poorly and qualitatively inadequately compared to other African countries. Of particular interest is the small percentage of Nigerian LIS studies that have direct policy implications (11.2%) indicating that even those studies that are done rarely provide practical policy implications for library development, information policy or educational practice.

Institutional Infrastructure for LIS Research

The institutional framework for LIS research in Nigeria is a complex and, for the most part, frustrating situation. There are currently 37 universities in Nigeria with accredited Library and Information Science or allied programmes (NUC, 2023). But there is huge variation in quality and resource base of these programmes. According to the survey conducted by LRCN (2022) among these 37 programmes, only 14 programmes had digital library facilities or departmental research laboratories which could carry out advanced research activities. There were only 9 reported active research groups/centres, with less than 5 having international research partnerships with foreign universities or research institutes.

The funding of Nigeria's libraries for research is woefully inadequate. Only a small percentage of the resources of the National Research Fund (NRF) administered by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), about 0.8% of the total research funding disbursed from 2019 to 2023, is spent on Library and Information Science (LIS) research (TETFund, 2023). The majority of Nigerian LIS researchers are largely funded from personal resources or from the award of small institutional grants that do not exceed the amount of N500,000 (or about \$320 USD at current exchange rates) and which limit the scale, length and quality of their research. The NRF of South Africa gives out competitive grants of up to R500,000 (about \$27,000 USD) to LIS research projects, highlighting the extent of the research funding problem in Nigeria (NRF, 2022).

LIS research's human capital is also seriously strained. Less than 40% of the academic staff of the LIS departments in Nigeria had Doctorates as of 2023, well below NUC's 60% minimum requirement for academic departments (NUC, 2023). Due to high turnover rates, mainly associated with brain drain to foreign universities and private sector, as well as low salaries and lacking professional development opportunities, many LIS departments, have lost their research capacity. One of the most pronounced symptoms of this human capital syndrome is the gradual shifting of the demographic composition of the LIS faculty towards old age, with little replacement by young and active researchers, which has the potential of undermining the sustainability of the Nigerian LIS research ecosystem.

Table 2. Institutional Indicators for LIS Research Capacity in Nigeria (2022–2024)

Institutional Indicator	Status / Figure
Universities offering accredited LIS programmes	37
Programmes with functional research labs/digital facilities	14 (37.8%)
Programmes with active research groups or centres	9 (24.3%)
Programmes with international research partnerships	5 (13.5%)
% LIS academic staff with doctoral degrees	38.7%
Average annual research funding per LIS department (₦)	< ₦2,000,000
% LIS researchers with at least one Scopus-indexed publication (2020–2024)	31.4%
Journals indexed in Scopus/ESCI published by Nigerian LIS institutions	3

Source: Compiled from NUC (2023); LRCN (2022); TETFund (2023); Scopus Analytics (2024).

From Table 2, it can be seen that the institutional structure for LIS research in Nigeria is very underdeveloped compared to the complexity of the information problem faced to the scale of the country. The gaps are not just academic irritants but real-life problems of the quality of evidence that can be drawn upon by library administrators, information policy makers and educational planners who design and implement Nigeria's information infrastructure.

The Brain Drain Crisis and Its Impact on LIS Research

The issue of brain drain cannot be ignored in the context of the Nigerian LIS research landscape because it is the

emigration of highly trained Nigerian LIS professionals to the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Australia and other countries where they enjoy better remuneration, research facilities, professional opportunities, etc. This phenomenon, which is in Nigeria known as the 'Japa syndrome' (Yoruba meaning 'to flee or escape quickly') has been observed to have increased at an unprecedented rate during the post-2019 period (Adeyemi & Salami, 2023).

According to the 2022 survey conducted by the Nigerian Library Association, 38% of those with master's degree and doctorate in LIS from the Nigerian universities had either migrated in the last three years or were intending to do so in the next 12 months (NLA, 2022). Another disturbing aspect of the emigrating lot is that they are mainly the younger, more international, and more research-oriented citizens, whose absence may be the most significant in terms of the revitalisation of research capacity in Nigeria's LIS. Taking this emigration into consideration of the already low completion of doctorates by Nigerians and the general under funding of LIS programmes, the structural danger to LIS research in Nigeria is vividly seen. In fact, Nigeria is producing knowledge workers for other richer countries as its own information infrastructure remains in shambles.

How LIS Research Drives National Development: A Multi-Dimensional Argument

LIS Research and Information Literacy for Democratic Participation

The proposition that information literacy is one of the most well-supported empirical propositions in LIS research is one of the most well supported propositions there is. Having the ability to identify, access, critically evaluate and effectively use information is evident as being important for citizens to be better informed to participate meaningfully in democratic process, such as voting, civic engagement, community organisation, and policy engagement (Bhatt & MacKenzie, 2020; Julien et al., 2021). This relationship is especially critical in Nigeria, where the quality of democratic participation has been highly compromised by the spread of political misinformation and disinformation, political manipulation of voters and instrumentalisation of social media for political propaganda (Akinfeleye & Nwachukwu, 2022).

The research and impact of LIS have created a rich and increasing evidence base for the design, delivery and outcomes of information literacy education which is directly relevant to the task of creating an informed Nigerian citizenry. The findings of Okeke and Anyanwu (2021) and Lawal et al. (2022) have shown that structured information literacy teaching enhances Nigerian students' information literacy competencies on sourcing and verifying the credibility of information sources, including news articles, social media, and government sources. This research agenda could be expanded to include information literacy needs and behaviours of out-of-school adults, rural and economically marginalized communities to support the development of effective national information literacy programmes that will directly contribute to the quality of Nigeria's democratic processes.

However, the contributions of LIS research to the information literacy policy in Nigeria has been limited. Although many empirical studies have confirmed the importance of information literacy education, there is no national framework for information literacy education, no coordinated programme of information literacy education in the government and no systematic system of translating the results of research and information literacy education to the design of library services or information literacy education policy (UNESCO, 2022; Adekunle & Tihamiyu, 2023). There is a gap between knowledge from research and policy action, which is one of the most harmful structural problems in the Nigerian LIS system that needs to be attended to by LIS educators, professional bodies and research institutions.

LIS Research and the Digital Economy

Nigeria's ambition to be a prominent digital economy in Africa is reflected in several policy documents such as the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy 2020-2030 (NDEPS) and the Nigeria Start-Up Act 2022. These frameworks acknowledge that to support the digital economy, the population must be technologically literate and also have a digitally literate population that can produce, consume, and critically analyze digital information. The digital literacy education, digital library development, management of digital information systems, data governance and social aspects of digital inclusion/exclusion are areas in which LIS research has a distinct and valuable role to play in achieving this aspiration.

Adekunle and Tihamiyu (2023), in their empirical study, have shown that the rate of digital inclusion, which is the availability of digital devices, Internet connectivity and digital inclusion skills, is significantly higher in communities supported by functional public and school libraries than in comparable communities without library services. The findings, obtained from the study of 28 local government areas in Lagos and Ogun States, has given convincing proof that properly resourced and professionally trained librarians' staffing of the library is an important node in the Nigeria's digital inclusion ecosystem. The authors however state that such advantages are realised in the few libraries that have been modernised with ICT infrastructure and those staffed with librarians who are currently trained in digital literacy facilitation; a situation that can only be found in only a small minority of the around 3,200 public libraries in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022).

The study of knowledge management, data curation, and information architecture, which are current and vital research fields in LIS, have direct relevance to Nigeria's emerging technology industry. The volume of data created and handled by Nigerian fintech companies, health technology, agricultural data platforms, and e-government services continues to increase, which is driving a rise in the need for individuals who have information architecture and metadata management, digital preservation, and data governance skills (Okoye & Nwachukwu, 2022). LIS programmes doing research on these topics and training students in the relevant skills are therefore directly contributing to the human capital pipeline of Nigeria's digital economy, which is currently under-recognised and undervalued by government and industry.

Table 3. LIS Research Contributions to Nigeria's Digital Economy Agenda

LIS Research Domain	National Development Dimension	Key Evidence
Digital literacy education	Digital inclusion and citizen empowerment	Adekunle & Tiamiyu (2023); UNESCO (2022)
Information literacy instruction	Critical thinking and media literacy	Okeke & Anyanwu (2021); Julien et al. (2021)
Digital library development	Expanding access to scholarly knowledge	Ilo et al. (2021); Anyaoku et al. (2021)
Knowledge management research	Organisational efficiency and innovation	Okoye & Nwachukwu (2022); OECD (2022)
Data governance and curation	Digital infrastructure economy	Lor (2019); World Bank (2021)
Information policy research	Evidence-based library legislation	Nwosu & Okonkwo (2020); Federal Ministry of Education (2022)
E-government information services	Transparent and accountable governance	Akinfeleye & Nwachukwu (2022)

The wide and deep application potential of a well-funded and strategically oriented Nigerian LIS research programme to the Nigerian development agenda is seen in Table 3 which maps seven domains of LIS research to specific development dimensions. The evidence column, although it is necessarily selective, is intended to support each of the claimed evidence links by citing some of the most relevant recent scholarship.

LIS Research, Health Information, and Public Health Outcomes

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a turning point in the interplay between access to information, health literacy, and health outcomes. The pandemic in Nigeria was a stark reminder of the lethal impact of health misinformation and the need for a robust health information system that will empower citizens to make informed choices on prevention, treatment and vaccination (Adeloye et al., 2021). With the pandemic response coming into the mainstream, libraries, information practitioners and health information literacy researchers were brought into the front lines of the battle to curate authoritative health information, to counter misinformation, to help health workers lacking access to medical databases get access to health information, and to play a leading role in data management for contact tracing efforts.

The findings of the research on health information literacy, health information-seeking behaviour and the design of health communication interventions have practical implications to Nigeria's public health system. In community with access to public library health information service, patients showed significantly higher level of adherence to prescribed medication regimen and preventive health behaviour as compared to patients in communities without access to health information services, which corroborate the findings of Okonkwo and Obi (2021). Libraries-based health literacy workshops were found to be effective in enhancing HIV/AIDS knowledge and reducing stigma in rural areas of Kwara State by Lawal et al. (2022). The results suggest a strong and untapped role of LIS research and practice to impact on health outcomes with important cost-effectiveness implications for Nigeria's public health investments.

Despite this, LIS research has a very fledgling status in the health information landscape in Nigeria. Health librarianship does not exist as a specific professional specialization in the education of health librarians in Nigeria; health information systems, medical library services and medical information literacy for patients are not the core components of LIS scholarship in Nigeria. It would be very useful to recognise health information as a priority research field within Nigerian

LIS, providing courses in LIS programmes, funding for this field of research and partnerships with medical schools and public health agencies, thus enhancing public health and adding to the relevance and visibility of LIS research in the eyes of non-traditional partners.

LIS Research and Educational Development

Of all the educational development connections that are discussed in this article, the relationship of LIS and educational development seems to be the most direct and well known. School and academic libraries are among the most widely researched library objects and the evidence base for the contribution of academic libraries to the learning outcomes is wide and robust. A series of systematic reviews by Lance and Kachel (2021) from 22 countries has all confirmed that students in well-staffed and well-resourced libraries in schools show significantly better performance on a wide variety of academic measures than those in under-resourced schools, such as reading achievement, information literacy, critical thinking, and overall academic performance.

The results of this global study of school libraries have significant implications for Nigeria, a country where school libraries are severely underfunded and understaffed, with the Federal Ministry of Education (2022), noting that less than 12% of public schools in Nigeria has schools that are equipped with libraries. The issue is that Nigerian LIS researchers have not produced enough local evidence that shows the relationship between school library quality and educational outcomes to convince the Nigerian policy makers, who may be wary of conclusions drawn from foreign studies, to invest in this. The development of a solid base of locally-relevant and credible empirical research on the impact of school libraries is therefore one of the most critical and high impact investments that the LIS research community in Nigeria can make, to the entire LIS profession as well as to the education system that LIS serves.

The quality research that is the basis of the university's ranking, international cooperation and knowledge creation depends on research library development and academic information services at the university level. The study by Obokoh and Iwu (2022) showed that Nigerian universities that invested more resources on their library (measured per student) recorded significantly better scores on the NUC's quality assurance assessments and had higher number of internationally referenced research outputs. This is a virtuous cycle as investment in libraries leads to improved research quality, which leads to a better reputation for the institution, which in turn leads to even more investment, and a vicious cycle in reverse if you will: inadequate funding of libraries leads to a deterioration in quality of research, which leads to a more negative reputation for the library, which leads to even less funding.

LIS Research and Indigenous Knowledge Preservation

Preservation and management of indigenous knowledge is one of the unique and transformative research areas of LIS for national development in Nigeria. Nigeria has one of the world's most complete and diverse heritage of indigenous knowledge systems, which encompass traditional medicine, farming methods, traditional literature, traditional art and craft, governance traditions, and ecological management, and have been gathered over millennia by hundreds of different ethnic and linguistic groups. Generational discontinuity, urbanisation, environmental degradation and colonial/post-colonial education systems, which perpetuate cultural marginalisation, are under serious threat to this knowledge heritage (as documented by scholars over the years; see Tiarniyu & Olusegun, 2021; Ekwueme & Izuogu, 2022).

LIS research undertaken on indigenous knowledge documentation, the standards of the metadata associated with African oral traditions, digital preservation of cultural heritage and community-based knowledge management can serve as great instruments to slow down this process. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments' digitisation programme and the Africa Digital Library programme of the University of Ibadan are examples of projects that have demonstrated the technical and cultural viability of the preservation of indigenous knowledge on a large scale; the ability to carry out these projects needs the competencies of a well-trained community of research active Librarians and Information Scientists (LIS) that are capable of being engaged with the community (Tiarniyu & Olusegun, 2021). Investing in LIS research is, therefore, an investment in cultural heritage, national identity and a knowledge commons that can provide solutions to issues in today's world of health, agriculture and environmental management.

The Case for Urgent Action: A Critical Argument

The Policy-Research Disconnect Must Be Addressed

The most basic structural challenge in the Nigerian LIS research system is the almost complete disengagement between research and policy. Nigerian LIS researchers generate research, publish papers, and make recommendations, but these pieces of scholarship rarely make it from the academic research journal to the government office or institutional boardroom. This imbalance is not exclusive to LIS (it is representative of the situation of many social sciences research

programmes in Nigeria), but it is very unfortunate that it exists in the discipline with a mission to improve information service and systems that have direct impact on millions of Nigerians.

Multiple and reinforcing, the causes can be identified for this disconnect. Nigeria LIS studies have faced criticisms of their limited theoretical scope, restricted methodological approaches, and inadequate policy analysis in the past (Madu & Adeniran, 2021). Much of the research has been preoccupied more with meeting publication criteria for researchers than with providing the information consumers want and need in the policy sphere. As for policy, the policy makers in the government, library administration and educational management seldom read academic journals, while there are limited institutional arrangements, policy briefs, units for the translation of research into knowledge outputs which are easily understood and usable, academic-government liaison offices and structures for the transfer of knowledge to policy makers (Nwosu & Okonkwo, 2020).

So, this disconnect must be addressed on both fronts. Increasing policy awareness and communication skills is a necessary step for LIS research that involves creating plain-English versions of research findings, as well as being a more proactive member of professional associations and government agencies, and explicitly designing research to answer policy questions. Meanwhile, the necessity of establishing formal structures for the commissioning, receipt and implementation of LIS research, such as dedicated LIS research units, periodic LIS research symposia including government participation and explicit commitment to the development of government library policy based on research, needs to be created.

Funding is Not Charity, It is Strategic Investment

The claim that Nigeria is unable to significantly invest in LIS research should be dismissed as not only factually incorrect but also short-sighted. The educational and information research Return on Investment is documented: OECD (2022) estimates that for every \$1 invested in high-quality educational research, there are yields of \$3 to \$7 in better outcomes in education, fewer remediation costs and greater human capital productivity over 10 years. In the Nigerian context, there are no specific figures to illustrate the impact of LIS research investment, but from the evidence reviewed in this article, the impact of LIS research investment in Nigeria, such as contributing to digital inclusion, health outcome, educational attainment and development of knowledge economy would be tremendous.

It is not charity that is required but strategic investments based on a national LIS research agenda. The Nigerian government should set up a National LIS Research Fund, similar to the NRF of South Africa, but adapted to the Nigerian context and resources, to fund LIS research projects in line with national development priorities through competitive grants. TETFund, which also has the responsibility of funding research and development in tertiary institutions, should increase its LIS research allocation from the current allocation of less than 0.8% of its disbursements to at least 3% of the yearly disbursements in order to improve the funding landscape for LIS research in Nigeria. Private sector actors, especially in telecommunications, fintech and tech, who are largely reliant on information infrastructure should be encouraged to co-fund LIS research in industry-academic partnerships.

LIS Must Assert Its Development Identity

The third and perhaps most important aspect of the argument put forth in this article is that the entire LIS community (educators, researchers, practitioners and associations) should actively participate in the evolution of the story of LIS in Nigeria. It has been over time plagued with professional identity and public visibility issues and is considered as a 'less serious' affair as compared to a more serious work of national development. Although it is harsh, it is not entirely untrue: LIS has not always made a very clear statement about the contributions it makes to development, and its involvement in the mainstream of development policy debate has been underwhelming and "reactive."

Now is the time to be more assertive, confident, and strategic in our engagement. LIS associations, universities, and individual academics should engage in the creation of policy briefs, development reports and public communication products that help advocate the value of LIS research and practice in development-relevant policy terms that are meaningful to policy makers, donors and the public. Relationships with development partners, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (with a well-established library development initiative) and the African Development Bank, should be actively pursued. And, LIS researchers should think in development terms: not just 'a study of library use at University X' but 'an investigation of how information access influences educational attainment in under-resourced communities in Nigeria', and as such, it is strategically and intellectually more compelling.

Statistical Evidence: The Scale of the Information Challenge

The need for improved LIS studies in Nigeria can be strongly exemplified by a quick survey of the statistics of Nigeria's

information environment. These are not just statistics, they are the lived experiences of millions of Nigerians who have to deal with the daily reality of not having enough information to develop their human capacities.

Table 4. Key Statistical Indicators of Nigeria's Information Environment (2022–2024)

Indicator	Value / Status	Source
Adult literacy rate	62.0% (male: 71.3%; female: 52.7%)	UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2023)
Functional public libraries per 100,000 population	0.18 (sub-Saharan Africa avg.: 0.41)	IFLA (2023)
Internet penetration rate	43.1% (urban: 68.2%; rural: 19.7%)	NCC (2023)
Schools with functional libraries (% public schools)	11.8%	Federal Ministry of Education (2022)
University libraries rated 'adequate' by NUC standards	34.2% of 170 assessed	NUC (2023)
% of Nigerians who have used a public library in past 12 months	7.3%	Gallup/NLA Survey (2022)
Newspaper circulation per 1,000 adults	4.1 (global median: 47.3)	World Press Trends (2023)
Research publications per million population (LIS, 2019–2023)	2.4 (South Africa: 11.7)	Scopus Analytics (2024)

The data in Table 4 paint a grim picture. Nigeria has a public library provision rate of 0.18 per 100,000 population which is below the average sub-Saharan African rate of 0.38 per 100,000 population, and close to one-fifth of the IFLA (2023) recommended rate of 1.5. This suggests that the library infrastructure is underdeveloped in Nigeria, as only 7.3% of the people used a public library in the last year, while more than half (50.5%) of the population in Scandinavian countries used a public library over the last year, and more than a third (30.5%) of South Africans used a public library over the last year. At the same time, the adult literacy rate is less than 70% for men and less than 55% for women and excellent rural – urban differences are directly related to the design and provision of library services.

These statistics are not just a problem, it's a chance to do something about it. With 220 million people, a youthful population, a fast-expanding internet connection and great unmet demand for robust, structured information access, it's likely to be one of the most meaningful markets that library and information service is yet to tap in the world. Studies that can inform the information needs, information behaviors, and barriers of this population and develop evidence-based designs for services that can satisfy their information needs have the potential to be very influential. The question is: Can the LIS research community in Nigeria rise to this challenge or will they remain constrained by insufficient resources, lack of institutional support and lack of ambition?

The Way Forward: A Research Agenda for National Development

This article concludes by advancing a concrete research agenda, a set of priority research domains that, if systematically investigated by Nigeria's LIS community over the next decade, would generate the knowledge base necessary to drive meaningful library development and information policy reform in support of national development.

Priority Research Domain 1: Public Library Impact Assessment

There is an urgent need for high quality, longitudinal studies on the Social, Educational and Economic effects of Public Library Services in Nigeria, which will give the necessary evidence for continued support of the public library by the government. Development economists and government budget officers are looking for rigorous causal evidence, such as that provided by impact assessment methodologies such as randomised controlled trials, propensity score matching, and cost-benefit analysis, to be able to make such judgments about Nigerian public library programmes. This research programme should be carried out by a consortium of LIS departments in collaboration with National Library of Nigeria and

State Library Boards and funded by TETFund and development partners.

Priority Research Domain 2: Information Literacy and Civic Competence

The design, delivery and impact of information literacy education, especially for adolescents and young adults, should be a national priority since Nigeria has problems with democracy and the threat of the spread of political misinformation. The most efficient pedagogical strategies for promoting critical information literacy in the Nigerian educational environment, the function of library/ librarians in media literacy education and the linkages between information literacy competencies and civic participation outcomes should be investigated in this research agenda.

Priority Research Domain 3: Digital Inclusion and Library Services

Internet access is nearing 50%, and digital exclusion is clearly a problem for rural, female and elderly users, and work in this area is of significant strategic value in understanding the ways in which libraries can be digital inclusion hubs. The agenda should focus on the study of various models of digital literacy facilitation that are relevant in different contexts in Nigeria, the infrastructure and training needs of digital public libraries, and how mobile library services can help to reach digitally excluded communities.

Priority Research Domain 4: Indigenous Knowledge Management

Due to the linguistic and cultural diversity of Nigeria, it has an exceptional research opportunity on documentation and management of indigenous knowledge. It is recommended that a nationwide research program be established to document the oral traditions, traditional medicine knowledge and ecological management practices, with methodologies that will be standardized, and that will take into account the rights of the communities as intellectual property owners, while at the same time making this knowledge accessible for research, educational and application in development.

Priority Research Domain 5: LIS Education Quality and Graduate Outcomes

Research in the area of quality and relevance of LIS education in Nigeria and its impact on the labour market are crucial in order to stimulate curriculum reform. Conducting tracer studies, which trace the LIS graduates into the labour market, conducting interviews with employers to assess the skills and knowledge gaps of LIS graduates and conducting the comparison of the quality of the curriculum of LIS institutions would present actionable insights for the NUC, LRCN and individual LIS departments to modernise their curriculum and ensure better employability of their graduates.

Conclusion: Research as Liberation

In short, the argument presented in this article can be summed up as that research in Library and Information Science isn't some luxury of an academic pastime, it is a requirement for development. In a country where over 100 million people live in information poverty, with the infrastructure of organised knowledge access and access to evidence becoming increasingly critical, and where, year after year, there is an increasing disconnect between policy aspiration and policy evidence, the need for rigorous, relevant and strategically oriented LIS research is more pressing than ever. The findings of this article show that knowledge derived from LIS research, if well conducted and adequately communicated, can be used to enhance democracy, digital inclusion, public health, education and the conservation of Nigeria's irreplaceable cultural heritage.

However, potential is not an inevitability. The development promise of LIS research in Nigeria must be taken up by various actors in a deliberate, continued and political way. Government has to pay for what it says it values. Professional societies should call for action at a time when it is urgently needed. Universities should provide the environment, equip the scholars with suitable staffing and research facilities, train them in their methodology and provide good linkages with foreign universities in order to enable LIS scholars to conduct research at the highest level. But LIS researchers should be more assertive in the development discourse, and promote their field of language and fora that extend beyond the converted. This will not occur within a night. Until there is a clear understanding of the role that LIS research can play in the development of Nigeria, and the institutional drive to make this vision a reality, the vast potential of LIS research will be wasted.

The famous saying of the philosopher Francis Bacon is "knowledge is power". Knowledge is development in 21st century Nigeria and the knowledge must be organised, accessible and equitably distributed. Library and Information Science is the research field most closely allied with the making of that knowledge real to all Nigerians, not just those who have access to information due to their university education but those people who need information for their various activities such as the farmer in Kebbi State, Nigeria who requires accurate weather and market information, the mother in

Anambra State who requires reliable health information, the student in Borno who requires a functional school library, and the entrepreneur in Lagos who requires information architecture skills to manage the data assets of her growing business. The development of the Nigeria's LIS research ecosystem is a reality for all these and millions of others and is a pressing issue. This article is an invitation to do just that.

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