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# Perception and Practice of Information Ethics by Librarians in Four Higher Institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria

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**PERCEPTION AND PRACTICE OF INFORMATION ETHICS BY LIBRARIANS IN  
FOUR HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was designed to investigate the perception and practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted with population size consisted of 47 librarians under population of the study; total enumeration sampling technique was used. Questionnaire and interview for four (4) Senior Librarians were the instruments adopted for data collection. Out of 47 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed, 46 were returned, and considered suitable for data analysis. Three research questions with one null hypothesis (tested at 0.05 level of significance) were formulated for this study. SPSS output format based on simple frequency count and percentage distribution, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's Chi-Square was used for data analysis. The findings of this study revealed both high positive and negative perceptions that: the activities of librarians in higher institutions are shaped by norms which include ethical and legal ones; ethical aspects of information profession are to be considered for professional practice and information services by librarians. Meanwhile, the level of practice of Information Ethics (IE) by librarians was moderate in some aspects and low in other aspects of Information Ethics; this also varies from institutions. However, it was revealed that there is no significant relationship between perception and practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. One of the recommendations made include: Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) should intensify her efforts in promoting professional ethics among librarians in Nigeria.

**Key Words:** Perception, Information Ethics, Librarianship, Professional Ethics, Code of ethics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary times, information plays a key role in every aspect of human life as needs demand. Provision of information services to users in higher institutions is the major task vested on librarians. The task is multifaceted, especially in today's digital environment where the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is essential for personal and professional advancements. Enormous changes are taking place in the information landscape which necessitates librarians to understand moral issues involved in information services in higher institution. Despite advances in technology, libraries in tertiary institutions still play important roles. Therefore, academic librarianship remains focused on users, information resources and moral intermediation role. However, there are modalities called ethics that guide the practice of the profession.

Ethics defines and provides ideas that sustain action that is good and right in terms of obligation, fairness and benefits to society, describes conduct of individuals or groups in the society (Markkula Centre for Applied Ethics, 2010; Mabawonku, 2010). From the description, ethics could be described as moral assessment or guidelines that judge what is right or wrong in professional practices. Meanwhile, every profession has ethical codes of conducts for their professionals. Professional ethics was defined by Airaksinen (2006) as a field of applied ethics, whose purpose is to define, clarifies, and criticize professional work and its typical values. In the United States, Librarians are persons who have been awarded the MLS or MLIS degree or certified as professionals by a state agency. (Reitz, 2004). Librarian in Nigeria, according to Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) (2014), is a professional trained with a minimum of a first degree in Library and Information Science. Librarians' practices are guided Information Ethics.

Information Ethics (IE), according to Adam (2005) is the field that investigates ethical issues arising from the development and application of information technology. The knowledge of Information Ethics largely resides in applied ethics, which provides the basic theoretical framework on which the pedagogical foundation and practice of Information Ethics can be constructed and applied (Capuro, 2009; Ocholla, 2008). From literature, the core areas in Information Ethics include intellectual freedom, equitable access to information, information privacy, and intellectual property. Meanwhile, librarians' perception and level of ethical practices have to be explored.

Perception of Information Ethics is contained in the understanding of the ways services are rendered by librarians as information providers, using moral standards. Since the ethical obligations of librarians would partly be determined by the roles librarians play in higher institutions, understanding the core values of librarianship becomes imperative. These values include: provision of equal access to information, data integrity, and intellectual property right (Ranganathan, 1931; Trushina, 2004). These are tactically integrated into librarians' professional codes of ethics but much study has not been done to determine level of librarians' perception and practice of Information Ethics in Nigeria. Because of librarianship importance in higher institutions, this study aimed at exploring librarians' perception and level of practice of Information Ethics as well as their awareness of the contents of codes of ethics in librarianship. The scopes of Information Ethics investigated were: intellectual freedom, privacy and confidentiality, intellectual property rights, access to information, and codes of ethics in librarianship. One null hypothesis, tested at 0.05 level of significance was formulated and stated that: "There is no significant relationship between perception and practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria"

The following research questions were raised:

1. What are librarians' perceptions of Information Ethics in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. What are professional codes of ethics required to be practiced by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria?
3. What is the level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria?

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Perception and practice of Information Ethics help librarians understand issues arising from lifecycle of information. Therefore, Librarians' activities are regulated by a range of norms and modalities. From personal observations by the authors, review of existing literature on ethical issues in librarianship (Onoyeyan, et.al, 2014), and interaction with librarians as well as library users, it has been discovered that librarians' practice of Information Ethics is low. Some of the problems noted include: lack of respect for users' privacy, preventing access to information, inadequate assistance to users while searching for information, lack of respect for intellectual

property right, and being biased in providing information to users. All these affect principles of information services, core values of librarianship, and professional ethics. As observed, librarians' perception, which presumes practice of Information Ethics has not been revealed through empirical studies. Level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians has to be presented as well. There is need to also explore librarians' awareness of codes of ethics in librarianship, which form one of the branches of Information Ethics and verify if librarians are aware of them. This is necessary because professionalism could be enhanced if ethics of the profession are observed.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Emerging trends in Information Ethics**

Ethical practice in information service delivery have been examined from many perspectives including choice of material (selection), access, equality of treatment, copyright intellectual freedom, protecting users' rights, confidentiality, and professional codes of ethics. Others are concealment of information, misinforming clients, divulging private information; disseminating false information (Hauptman, 2002). It is evident that practice of Information Ethics is better understood with focus on principles of information service delivery which involves professionals who are knowledgeable of how to behave towards the users in their libraries. An outcome of recent trends in information service is that on daily basis, professional and technological developments create more serious challenges and opportunities to draw on for information professionals (Mbofung and Popoola, 2014). There are many ways by which ethical issues can be examined.

Similarly, Capurro (2009) explained that the value of Information Ethics in Information Society includes: upholding the fundamental values of freedom, equality, tolerance, and respect for human rights. These submissions align with the results of other authors. Onoyeyan, et.al (2014) studied ethical concerns faced by practicing librarians in federal, state and private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Studying population consisted of 50 professional librarians; they found that intellectual property rights issues are the highest ethical issue confronting librarians. Abuse of confidential information and using official position for personal advantage are perceived as high unethical behavior among librarians. The results added that a majority of librarians do not have a copy of the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria Code of Ethics. As noted, intellectual

freedom, access to information and privacy was not treated among other ethical challenges in the study. How these concepts are understood and ethically practiced in Nigeria has not been fully explored.

### **Codes of ethics in librarianship**

Practice of Information Ethics by librarians is guided by professional conducts as contained in codes of ethics. A code of ethics, according to Onoyeyan (2014) is a list of guiding principles for ethical behavior. Mbofung and Popoola (2014) opined that the use of the codes include: providing guidance for dealing with ethical issues that are not addressed by the domain of codified law but that should not be left to the domain of free choice; getting legal support intended to protect the profession, individual practitioners and their clients; and lastly, supporting personal self-development. Librarians need to understand ethics, its implications on their actions, and how they should provide services.

IFLA's focus on professional ethics has led to construction of distinctive body of specialized knowledge and production of code of ethics which librarians can use to handle ethical dilemmas (International Federation of Library Associations, 2009). Librarianship ethics by the American Library Association (ALA) Council and amended January 22, 2008 contained the following, among others, as ethics of professional practice: Librarians provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable access; protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality; respect intellectual property rights; and strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing librarians' knowledge.

In Nigeria, code of ethics is developed by Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). The objectives are to: guide librarians' in maintaining standards of ethical behaviour in the profession; guide registered librarians in their daily discharge of duties in terms of safeguarding the interests of the community served, especially as they are engaged in the process of providing access to information; and build a strong moral and ethical foundation for the actualization of an information society (LRCN, 1995). Librarians occupy important position and this necessitates the need to balance conflicting demands in ethical issues that can adversely affect professional practices. However, one of the challenges is to reveal how they are effectively practiced by librarians in higher institutions.

Gorin (2014) conducted a survey on how librarians practice codes of ethics and reported that the debate on core values of librarianship focused on the role of the individual librarian, his social

responsibility and his freedom of expression. He also confirmed that sometimes librarians have to choose between their loyalty to their institutions, superiors, and necessary critique from a professional point of view as articulated.

### **3.1 Ethical perceptions and practices in librarianship**

In conceptualizing perception, Balcetis and Dunning (2007) maintained that perception is essentially the interface between the outer and inner worlds. In essence, social targets and the contextual stimuli of the outer environment create signals that can be sensed converted into psychologically meaningful representations that define humans' inner experience of the world. As deduced from literature, there is no static opinion that perception determines practice in any ways. Nath, Chowdhury, and Sengupta (2010) studied perception and practice of hygiene and its impact on health in India. They reported that community perception of health and hygiene issues has a strong influence on hygiene practice. Meanwhile, Dhawan (2012) argued that the responsibilities to practice Information Ethics involve a wide range of elements which include accepting those tasks that are within one's reach and providing library users with a realistic forecast of what is obtainable while searching the best resources. In spite of this explanation, practice of Information Ethics by librarians has different dimensions which include understanding core values of librarianship.

One of the major practices of librarianship is classification. According to Mai (2013) classifications reflect reality which is biased, unjust, and full of contradictions. One challenge for librarians working in large libraries with diverse collections and users is to provide access tools that minimize the harm done by classifications. Information resource sharing is another common practice in librarianship. On this, Chatterjee (2010) argued that information resource sharing does not merely mean mutual sharing of information sources among libraries; it includes use of resources in one library for rendering services in another library. It is evident from these findings that the conditions attached to resource sharing are to ensure fair use and dealings.

Equally, Igbeka and Okoroma's (2013) study focused on the awareness and practicability of librarianship ethics among librarians in Nigeria. They reported that awareness of the ethical values was quite low and that the degree of practicability of many ethical codes was very questionable. Also, Fallis (2007) studied Information Ethics for 21st Century Library Professionals and submitted that in order to deal effectively with ethical dilemmas, library professionals must have a good working knowledge of Information Ethics. He recommended that

courses on Information Ethics be part of the education for information professionals since the concept is new in Africa.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

There are variety of theoretical claims about the nature and methodology of Information Ethics; each gives criterion for distinguishing between right and wrong actions. Ethical theories can be divided into four: consequences, duties, rights, or virtues. Consequence-based theory was adopted for this study.

According to a Consequence-based Theory, *“what distinguishes right actions from wrong actions is that they have better consequences. Hence, in order to do the right thing, librarians must perform actions that have the good consequences”* This theory has a bit of intuitive appeal which can be easily applied to the ethical dilemmas faced by library librarians. The main example of a Consequence-based Theory is utilitarianism which ensures that goodness is measured in terms of the amount of happiness in the world. The most influential proponent of utilitarianism is the British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Mill’s (1859) influential argument for intellectual freedom and other issues shows how utilitarianism can be applied to Information Ethics. The theory is related to this study because since several studies have revealed how perception determines practice and practice is about action; then, every action has consequences which can make or mar the society. With librarians’ intermediary role in higher institution, this theory helps understand consequences attached to either observance or rejection of ethical principles of the profession.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted survey research design to elicit responses on the perception and practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. The population consisted of 47 librarians from four higher institutions. The populations of the four higher institutions were purposively selected for an in-depth scientific inquiry into the perception and practice of Information Ethics by Librarians in those institutions. In Nigeria, librarian, as described by Librarians’ Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) (2014), is a professional trained with a minimum of a first degree in Library and Information Science. Hence, librarians

that were considered in this study were those with Bachelor of Library and Information Studies (BLIS) up-to Doctoral degree in library and Information Studies.

The institutions were made up of two universities, one polytechnic, and one College of Education. Total enumeration sampling technique was used to select all librarians with Bachelor-Doctoral degree in Library and Information Studies. With the aid of sampling frame, samples were selected using probability proportional to size method because the population was heterogeneous and population size was known.

The instruments for data collection in this study were questionnaire and the interviews of Head units were used to achieve the objectives stated for this study. A self-developed questionnaire by the researcher consisting of sections A to D. was adopted. Section A sought the demographic information of the respondents while Section B focused on librarians' perception of Information Ethics. Section C centered on professional codes of ethics to be practiced by librarians in higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria as Section D assessed level of practice of practice of Information Ethics by librarians in higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. The response and scoring format for the questionnaire was: Strongly Agree (SA)-4, Agree (A)-3, Strongly Disagree (SD)-2, and Disagree (D)-1. Other formats were: Always-4, Sometimes-3, Rarely-2 and Never-1. Questionnaire was appropriate because it is capable of reaching large number of respondents and also provides privacy for responses. Also set of questions were drafted, critiqued, and used to conduct interview for the heads of units in the four institutions under this scientific investigation.

Researchers subjected the instruments to face validity by sending three copies of the drafted questionnaire to the panel of judges comprising experts in LIS and at departments of philosophy and psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Corrected version of the questionnaire was used for a test-retest exercise. Content validity was done by administering a minimum of 15 copies of the revised instrument on respondents outside the study sample but with common features. The analysis of fifteen (15) respondents showed Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of **0.889** from the total number of 64 items. Data were analyzed using an SPSS version 22 output format based on simple frequency count, percentage distribution, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's Chi-Square.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Factors

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic factors**

Gender	University of Ibadan		Ajayi Crowther University		The Polytechnic, Ibadan		Emmanuel Alayande College of Education	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Male	12	52.2	2	28.6	5	55.6	5	71.4
Female	11	47.8	5	71.4	4	44.4	2	28.6
<b>Position/cadre</b>								
Librarian I	3	13.0	1	14.3	-	-	-	-
Librarian II	11	47.8	2	28.6	4	44.4	4	57.1
Library Officer	4	17.4	3	42.9	4	44.4	2	28.6
Principal librarian	2	8.7	-	-	1	11.1		
Senior Librarian	2	8.6	1	14.3	-	-	1	14.3
<b>Highest Academic Qualification</b>								
BLIS	-	-	1	14.3	1	11.1	1	14.3
MLIS	19	82.6	5	71.4	8	88.8	6	85.7
Ph.D	4	17.4	1	14.3	-	-		
<b>Years of Work Experience</b>								
1-5yrs	5	21.7	2	28.6	2	22.2	2	28.6
6-10yrs	12	52.2	3	42.9	4	44.4	4	57.1
11-15yrs	5	21.7	2	28.6	2	22.2	1	14.3
16-20yrs	1	4.3			1	11.1		
<b>Age</b>								
15-25yrs	4	17.4	2	28.6	2	22.2	2	28.6
26-35yrs	14	60.9	3	42.9	3	33.3	3	42.9
36-45yrs	3	13.0	1	14.3	2	22.2	1	14.3
46yrs and above	2	8.7	1	14.3	2	22.2	1	14.3

N	23	7	9	7
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Most respondents (52.2%) at University of Ibadan were male. The implication of this is that the employment policy of librarians at that time favoured male. 47.8% were Librarian II which implies that they are at the middle of their career and still have a long way to go in the profession. 82.6% of the respondents had masters' degree in librarianship (M.LIS); and 60.9% were between ages 26-35 years. Their academic qualifications are evidences showing the quality of staff at the institution while their years of experiences imply that they are not new entrants in the profession. Their ages have implication for how long they can still continue to practice librarianship, as long as they are healthy. In contrast, most respondents (71.4%) at Ajayi Crowder University were female, this shows that employment policy of librarians' favours female. 71.4% had master degree in librarianship (M.LIS), 42.9% have been working in the library for a period between 6-10 years; and 42.9% were between ages 26-35 years. The percentage for the cadre in this library implies that some library personnel are working below their academic qualifications.

Similarly, most respondents (55.6%) at the Polytechnic Ibadan were male, 44.4% were Library Officers, 44.4% were Librarian II, 88.8% had master degree in librarianship (M.LIS). 44.4% have been working in the library for a period between 6-10 years and 33.3% were between ages 26-35 years. The situation in this institution is also similar to that of Ajayi Crowther University, except in the area of employment policy which favours male than female applicants. Finally, most respondents (71.4%) at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education were male, 57.1% were Librarian II, while 85.7% had masters' degree in librarianship (M.LIS). 57.1% have been working in the library for a period between 6-10 years and 42.9% were between ages 26-35 years. It could be inferred from the results that the respondents were experienced professional librarians with at least B.LIS academic qualification; they are in their active years of service since they were still under 40 years of age.

**Research Question One: What are librarians' perceptions of Information Ethics in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria?**

**Table 2a: Librarians’ perceptions of information ethics**

	University of Ibadan											AjayiCrowther University									
	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
<b>POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS</b>																					
The activities of librarians in higher institutions are shaped by a range norms which include ethical and legal ones	12	52.2	7	30.4	3	13.0	1	4.3	3.30	.876	2	28.6	4	57.1	1	14.3	-	-	3.14	.690	
Ethical aspects of information profession are to be considered for professional practice and information services by librarians	15	65.2	3	13.0	1	4.3	4	17.4	3.26	1.176	3	42.9	-	-	1	14.3	3	42.9	2.43	1.512	
Information ethics includes moral ways of managing information and code of conducts that guide professional decisions	4	17.4	10	43.5	5	21.7	4	17.4	2.61	.988	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	3	42.9	2.00	1.155	
Information ethics is concerned with use and misuse of information and ethical issues arising from the lifecycle of information	6	26.1	11	47.8	5	21.7	1	4.3	2.96	.825	2	28.6	3	42.9	1	14.3	1	14.3	2.86	1.069	
The changes that new technologies have brought into information landscape demand that librarians be aware of ethical ways of using them	14	60.9	1	4.3	3	13.0	5	21.7	3.04	1.296	4	57.1	-	-	-	-	3	42.9	2.71	1.604	

**NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS**

Librarians in higher institutions do not need to embrace ethical issues in the profession while rendering library services	6	26.1	4	17.4	9	39.1	4	17.4	2.52	1.082	2	28.6	1	14.3	1	14.3	3	42.9	2.29	1.380
Promoting equal opportunities and access to information by librarians does not make users feel important in the library	6	26.1	2	8.7	11	47.8	4	17.4	2.43	1.080	3	42.9	-	-	1	14.3	3	42.9	2.43	1.512
Librarians are not concerned about users' confidentiality and private information in higher institutions since they provide service to users free of charge	4	17.4	11	47.8	5	21.7	3	13.0	2.70	.926	2	28.6	3	42.9	2	28.6	-	-	3.00	.816
Librarians acquire and keep intellectual contents of authors, hence, they are not meant to abide by laws backing intellectual property	6	26.1	11	47.8	1	4.3	5	21.7	2.78	1.085	2	28.6	1	14.3	1	14.3	3	42.9	2.29	1.380
There is no need for librarians to consider their self-interest and moral contradictions in order to embrace information ethics	6	26.1	4	17.4	11	47.8	2	8.7	2.61	.988	2	28.6	2	28.6	3	42.9	-	-	2.86	.900
<b>N</b>	<b>23</b>										<b>7</b>									

**Table 2b: Librarians’ perceptions of information ethics (Cont’d)**

		The Polytechnic, Ibadan										Emmanuel Alayande College of Education									
		SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
<b>POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS</b>																					
	The activities of librarians in higher institutions are shaped by a range norms which include ethical and legal ones	4	44.4	2	22.2	2	22.2	1	11.1	3.00	1.118	4	57.1	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	3.14	1.215
	Ethical aspects of information profession are to be considered for professional practice and information services by librarians	5	55.6	2	22.2			2	22.2	3.11	1.269	5	71.4	2	28.6					3.71	.488
	Information ethics includes moral ways of managing information and code of conducts that guide professional decisions	3	33.3	4	44.4	1	11.1	1	11.1	3.00	1.000	2	28.6	5	71.4					3.29	.488
	Information ethics is concerned with use and misuse of information and ethical issues arising from the lifecycle of information	3	33.3	3	33.3	2	22.2	1	11.1	2.89	1.054	2	28.6	3	42.9	2	28.6			3.00	.816
	The changes that new technologies have brought into information landscape demand that librarians be aware of ethical ways of using them	4	44.4	1	11.1	2	22.2	2	22.2	2.78	1.302	4	57.1	1	14.3	2	28.6			3.29	.951
<b>NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS</b>																					
	Librarians in higher institutions do not need to embrace ethical issues in the profession while rendering library services	3	33.3	1	11.1	4	44.4	1	11.1	2.67	1.118	2	28.6	1	14.3	4	57.1			2.71	.951
	Promoting equal opportunities and access to information by librarians does not make users feel important in the library	1	11.1	2	22.2	5	55.6	1	11.1	2.33	.866			2	28.6	5	71.4			2.29	.488
	Librarians are not concerned about users’	1	11.1	3	33.3	2	22.2	3	33.3	2.22	1.093			3	42.9	1	14.3	3	42.9	2.00	1.000

	confidentiality and private information in higher institutions since they provide service to users free of charge																				
	Librarians acquire and keep intellectual contents of authors, hence, they are not meant to abide by laws backing intellectual property	3	33.3	3	33.3	1	11.1	2	22.2	2.78	1.202	2	28.6	4	57.1			1	14.3	3.00	1.000
	There is no need for librarians to consider their self-interest and moral contradictions in order to embrace information ethics	3	33.3	1	11.1	3	33.3	2	22.2	2.56	1.236	2	28.6			3	42.9	2	28.6	2.29	1.254
	N	9										7									

The respondents at the University of Ibadan indicated their positive perception of Information Ethics as follows: the activities of librarians in higher institutions are shaped by a range norms which include ethical and legal ones had the highest mean = 3.30 and std deviation = 0.876, ethical aspects of information profession are to be considered for professional practice and information services by librarians (mean = 3.26 and std. deviation = 1.176), and the changes that new technologies have brought into information landscape demand that librarians be aware of ethical ways of using them (mean = 3.04 and std. deviation = 1.296). The main negative perception among librarians in all the four institutions was that: librarians acquire and keep intellectual contents of authors hence, they are not meant to abide by laws backing intellectual property (University of Ibadan: mean = 2.78 and std. deviation = 1.085), (Ajayi Crowder University: mean = 2.86 and std. deviation = 0.900); (Polytechnic Ibadan: mean = 2.67 and std. deviation = 1.118), and (Emmanuel Alayande College of Education: mean = 2.71 and std. deviation = 0.951).

The respondents at Ajayi Crowder University indicated their positive perception of as follows: the activities of librarians in higher institutions are shaped by a range norms which include ethical and legal ones had the highest mean = 3.14 and std deviation = 0.690, Information Ethics is concerned with use and misuse of information and ethical issues arising from the lifecycle of information (mean = 2.86 and std. deviation = 1.069), and the changes that new technologies have brought into information landscape demand that librarians be aware of ethical ways of using them (mean = 2.71 and std. deviation = 1.604). The respondents at the Polytechnic Ibadan indicated that they had positive perception of Information Ethics as ethical aspects of information profession are to be considered for professional practice and information services by librarians had the highest mean = 3.11 and std deviation = 1.269. This is followed by Information Ethics include moral ways of managing information and code of conducts that guide professional decisions (mean = 3.00 and std. deviation = 1.000), and the activities of librarians in higher institutions are shaped by a range norms which include ethical and legal ones (mean = 3.00 and std. deviation = 1.118).

The respondents at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education indicated that they had positive perception of Information Ethics as Ethical aspects of information profession are to be considered for professional practice and information services by librarians had the highest mean = 3.71 and std deviation = 0.488. This is followed by Information ethics include moral ways of managing information and code of conducts that guide professional decisions (mean = 3.29 and std. deviation = 0.488) and the activities of librarians in higher institutions are shaped by a range norms which include ethical and legal ones (mean = 3.14 and std. deviation = 1.215).

**Research Question Two: What are professional codes of ethics required to be practiced by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria?**

**Table 3a: Codes of ethics to be practiced by librarians**

		University of Ibadan										Ajayi Crowther University									
		SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
	Librarian should guarantee the user access to available information resources regardless of the medium, without restriction that is not explicitly stated in laws and regulations	4	17.4	11	47.8	3	13.0	5	21.7	2.61	1.033	-	-	3	42.9	2	28.6	2	28.6	2.14	.900
	Librarian should promote inclusion and should not discriminate against any library user regardless of sex, ethnic group, nationality, social condition, religion or political opinions	6	26.1	13	56.5	2	8.7	2	8.7	3.00	.853	2	28.6	3	42.9	1	14.3	1	14.3	2.86	1.069
	Librarian should respect intellectual rights of authors and right of users to privacy, except where it is in the public interest and should not share confidential information or user data beyond the original transaction	3	13.0	11	47.8	6	26.1	3	13.0	2.61	.891	1	14.3	1	14.3	3	42.9	2	28.6	2.14	1.069
	Librarian should provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance to the user	6	26.1	12	52.2			5	21.7	2.83	1.072	2	28.6	3	42.9	-	-	2	28.6	2.71	1.254
	<b>N</b>	<b>23</b>										<b>7</b>									

**Table 3b: Codes of ethics to be practiced by librarians (Cont'd)**

		The Polytechnic, Ibadan										Emmanuel Alayande College of Education									
		SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
	Librarian should guarantee the user access to available information resources regardless of the medium, without restriction that is not explicitly stated in laws and regulations	3	33.3	2	22.2	2	22.2	2	22.2	2.67	1.225	3	42.9	3	42.9			1	14.3	3.29	.488
	Librarian should promote inclusion and should not discriminate against any library user regardless of sex, ethnic group, nationality, social condition, religion or political opinions	3	33.3	4	44.4	-	-	2	22.2	2.89	1.167	2	28.6	4	57.1			1	14.3	3.14	1.069
	Librarian should respect intellectual rights of authors and right of users to privacy, except where it is in the public interest and should not share confidential information or user data beyond the original transaction	3	33.3	4	44.4	1	11.1	1	11.1	3.00	1.000	2	28.6	5	71.4					3.00	1.000
	Librarian should provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance to the user	3	33.3	4	44.4			2	22.2	2.89	1.167	2	28.6	4	57.1			1	14.3	3.00	1.000
	N	9										7									

Most of the respondents in the four institutions at the University of Ibadan indicated as follow that librarians should promote inclusion and should not discriminate against any library user regardless of sex, ethnic group, nationality, social condition, religion or political opinions: University of Ibadan (highest mean = 3.00 and std. deviation = 0.853) and Ajayi Crowder University (highest mean = 2.86 and std. deviation = 1.069) Meanwhile, the least on the table as indicated was that librarians should guarantee the user access to available information resources regardless of the medium, without restriction that is not explicitly stated in laws and regulations: University of Ibadan with mean = 2.61 and std. deviation = 1.033. However, the least on the table at Ajayi Crowder University was that librarians should respect intellectual rights of authors and right of users to privacy, except where it is in the public interest and should not share confidential information or user data beyond the original transaction with mean = 2.14 and std. deviation = 1.069. (See table 4a).

As showed on table 4b, most of the respondents at the Polytechnic Ibadan indicated that librarians should respect intellectual rights of authors and right of users to privacy, except where it is in the public interest and should not share confidential information or user data beyond the original transaction with highest mean = 3.00 and std. deviation = 1.000. Hence, Librarians should guarantee the user access to available information resources regardless of the medium, without restriction that is not explicitly stated in laws and regulations was the least on the table with mean = 2.67 and std. deviation = 1.225. Most of the respondents at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education indicated that librarians should guarantee the user access to available information resources regardless of the medium, without restriction that is not explicitly stated in laws and regulations with highest mean = 3.14 and std. deviation = 1.069. Hence, librarians should provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance to the user was the least on the table with mean = 300 and std. deviation = 1.000.

**Research Question Three: What is the level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria?**

**Table 4a: Level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians**

	University of Ibadan										AjayiCrowther University									
	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Mean	SD	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
<b>INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM</b>																				
I respect the right of every library user to seek and receive information without restriction			6	26.1	6	26.1	11	47.8	1.78	.850	-	-	3	42.9	2	28.6	2	28.6	2.14	.900
I find it easy to help users develop their intellectual abilities by providing them with useful information materials	3	13.0	6	26.1	10	43.5	4	17.4	2.35	.935	1	14.3	3	42.9	3	42.9	-	-	2.71	.756
I give library users the right to seek and receive information in any form without restriction	4	17.4			12	52.2	7	30.4	2.04	1.022	2	28.6	-	-	3	42.9	2	28.6	2.29	1.254
As a knowledge custodian, for users' intellectual development, I ensure the availability of information to users	1	4.3	6	26.1	3	13.0	13	56.5	1.78	.998	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	4	57.1	1.86	1.215
<b>PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY</b>																				
I keep personally identifiable information about users on their behalf	3	13.0	2	8.7	7	30.4	11	47.8	1.87	1.058	1	14.3	-	-	1	14.3	5	71.4	1.57	1.134
I enforce control when human right and privacy of another library users are violated	4	17.4	3	13.0	2	8.7	14	60.9	1.87	1.217	3	42.9	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	2.71	1.380
As a librarian, I keep I keep circulation	2	8.7	1	4.3	11	47.8	9	39.1	1.83	.887	-	-	-	-	5	71.4	2	28.6	1.71	.488

	records related to patrons, as well the nature of reference questions they ask																					
	I use different measures to ensure that no illegal access is gained into information about library users	1	4.3	2	8.7	4	17.4	16	69.6	1.48	.846	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	3	42.9	2.00	1.155	
<b>INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHT</b>																						
	Intellectual property rights are observed and respected by me while providing information services	1	4.3	4	17.4	3	13.0	15	65.2	1.61	.941	-	-	1	14.3	2	28.6	4	57.1	1.57	.787	
	I make reference to the author(s) whose works are used when in my academic publications	1	4.3	1	4.3	10	43.5	11	47.8	1.65	.775	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	3	42.9	2.00	1.155	
	I make sure we do not go beyond the limit of what we can photocopy from a material in our library	1	4.3	2	8.7	3	13.0	17	73.9	1.43	.843	1	14.3	2	28.6	1	14.3	3	42.9	2.14	1.215	
	I use intellectual work of others for commercial gain without their permission	2	8.7	4	17.4	7	30.4	10	43.5	1.91	.996	-	-	2	28.6	2	28.6	3	42.9	1.86	.900	
<b>ACCESS TO INFORMATION</b>																						
	I consider individual information need to be of equal merit regardless of the age, gender, ethnicity, or status	1	4.3	3	13.0	11	47.8	8	34.8	1.87	.815	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	3	42.9	2.00	1.155	
	I render services aimed at supporting academic activities in my institutions to all users	4	17.4	1	4.3	4	17.4	14	60.9	1.78	1.166	-	-	2	28.6	1	14.3	4	57.1	2.00	1.414	
	I encourage freedom of access to information in the library and other databases	4	17.4	1	4.3	4	17.4	14	60.9	1.78	1.166	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	3	42.9	2.00	1.155	

As a librarian, I allow users to access information resources by providing appropriate retrieval system	4	17.4	3	13.0			16	69.6	1.78	1.242	1	14.3	2	28.6	-	-	4	57.1	2.00	1.291
<b>N</b>	<b>23</b>										<b>7</b>									

**Table 4b: Level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians (Cont'd)**

		The Polytechnic, Ibadan										Emmanuel Alayande College of Education									
		Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Mean	SD	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
<b>INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM</b>																					
	I respect the right of every library user to seek and receive information without restriction					5	55.6	4	44.4	1.56	.527					3	42.9	4	57.1	1.43	.535
	I find it easy to help users develop their intellectual abilities by providing them with useful information materials			2	22.2	5	55.6	2	22.2	2.00	.707			1	14.3	3	42.9	3	42.9	1.71	.756
	I give library users the right to seek and receive information in any form without restriction					6	66.7	3	33.3	1.67	.500					5	71.4	2	28.6	1.71	.488
	As a knowledge custodian, for users' intellectual development, I ensure the availability of information to users			1	11.1	1	11.1	7	77.8	1.33	.707			1	14.3	1	14.3	5	71.4	1.43	.787
<b>PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY</b>																					
	I keep personally identifiable information about users on their behalf			2	22.2	3	33.3	4	44.4	1.78	.833			2	28.6	3	42.9	2	28.6	2.00	.816
	I enforce control when human right and privacy of another library users are violated	1	11.1	2	22.2	2	22.2	4	44.4	2.00	1.118			1	14.3	1	14.3	5	71.4	1.43	.787
	As a librarian, I keep I keep circulation records related to patrons, as well the nature of reference questions they ask			1	11.1	4	44.4	4	44.4	1.67	.707	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	3	42.9	2.00	1.155
	I use different measures to ensure that no illegal access is gained into information about library users			1	11.1	1	11.1	7	77.8	1.33	.707			1	14.3			6	85.7	1.29	.756

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHT																					
Intellectual property rights are observed and respected by me while providing information services	1	11.1	2	22.2	1	11.1	5	55.6	1.89	1.167	1	14.3	1	14.3			5	71.4	1.71	1.254	
I make reference to the author(s) whose works are used when in my academic publications					8	88.9	1	11.1	1.89	.333					6	85.7	1	14.3	1.86	.378	
I make sure we do not go beyond the limit of what we can photocopy from a material in our library	1	11.1			1	11.1	7	77.8	1.56	1.130							7	100.0	1.00	.000	
I use intellectual work of others for commercial gain without their permission			1	11.1	4	44.4	4	44.4	1.67	.707	1	14.3			3	42.9	3	42.9	1.86	1.069	
ACCESS TO INFORMATION																					
I consider individual information need to be of equal merit regardless of the age, gender, ethnicity, or status			2	22.2	4	44.4	3	33.3	1.89	.782			1	14.3	4	57.1	2	28.6	1.86	.690	
I render services aimed at supporting academic activities in my institutions to all users	1	11.1	1	11.1	1	11.1	6	66.7	1.67	1.118	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	4	57.1	1.86	1.215	
I encourage freedom of access to information in the library and other databases	1	11.1			1	11.1	7	77.8	1.44	1.014	2	28.6					5	71.4	1.86	1.464	
As a librarian, I allow users to access information resources by providing appropriate retrieval system			1	11.1			8	88.9	1.22	.667							7	100.0	1.00	.000	
N	9										7										

Most of the respondents indicated as follow that they find it easy to help user develop their intellectual abilities by providing them with useful information materials: University of Ibadan (mean = 2.35 and std. deviation = 0.935); Ajayi Crowther University: (mean = 2.71 and std. deviation = 0.756). Respondents also give library users the right to seek and receive information in any form without restriction: University of Ibadan (mean = 2.04 and std. deviation = 1.022); Ajayi Crowther University (mean = 2.29 and std. deviation = 1.254). However, respondents opposed that they make sure that they do not go beyond the limit of what they can photocopy from a material in their libraries, as follow: University of Ibadan with mean = 1.43 and std. deviation = 0.843 while respondents at Ajayi Crowther University opposed that as a knowledge custodian, for users' intellectual development, they ensure the availability of information to users with mean = 1.86 and std. deviation = 1.215.

Nearly all the respondents at the Polytechnic Ibadan indicated that they find it easy to help user develop their intellectual abilities by providing them with useful information materials (mean = 2.00 and std. deviation = 0.707), and give library users the right to seek and receive information in any form without restriction (mean = 1.67 and std. deviation = 0.500). However, the respondents opposed that as knowledge custodians, for users' intellectual development, they ensure the availability of information to users with mean = 1.33 and std. deviation = 0.707. The majority of respondents at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education indicated that they keep circulation records related to patrons, as well the nature of reference questions they ask (mean = 2.00 and std. deviation = 1.155). They also keep personally identifiable information about users on their behalf (mean = 2.00 and std. deviation = 0.816). Meanwhile, they opposed that they make sure that they do not go beyond the limit of what we can photocopy from a material in our library with mean = 1.00 and std. deviation = 0.000. (See table 4.6b).

For the Test of Norm conducted to determine the level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians in the institutions surveyed, the scale between 1 – 21 shows that the level is low, scale 22 – 42 shows a moderate level, while 43 – 64 shows a high level of practice. Thus, the overall mean for practice of Information Ethics by librarians was 28.52 which fall between the scale “22 - 42”. Therefore, inference is that the level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State was moderate. Consequently, The Head of Readers Services at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, while rating the level of practice of Information

Ethics by librarians during an interview session stated that although the situation is moderate, yet it not at its best. Her point was also underscored by The Head of Technical Services at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo.

## 6.2 Presentation of hypothesis

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation Table showing relationship between perception and practice of Information Ethics by librarians**

Variable List	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	R	Df	Sig (p)
Perception of Information Ethics	27.78	4.957	46	-.243	45	.103
Practice of Information Ethics by librarians	28.52	6.207				

Significant at  $p > 0.05$

Literature differs on the relationship between perception and practice from one discipline to another. While some maintained that perception determines practice, others revealed that it is not, because of many underlying factors. Consequently, authors formulated a null hypothesis for this study which states that “there is no significant relationship between perception and practice of Information Ethics by Librarians in Four Higher Institutions in Oyo State Nigeria” The analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship ( $r = -0.243$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) between perception and practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. This shows that perception does not determine practice of Information Ethics by the librarians. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

## 6.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed positive perceptions librarians’ perceptions of Information Ethics in four higher institutions in Oyo, State, Nigeria which include the following, among others: activities of librarians in higher institutions are shaped by range norms which include

ethical and legal ones; ethical aspects of information profession are to be considered for professional practice and information services by librarians considering changes that new technologies have brought to information landscape; Information Ethics includes moral ways of managing information and code of conducts that guide professional decisions. The result aligns with the submission of Halawi and Karkoulian (2006) that Information Ethics focuses on moral, legal and ethical issues arising from the development and application of technologies in the information management; and Grossberg's (2007) that since there are different activities involved in perception, feedback from the perceiver is needed to initiate the process of separating forms from each other during figure-ground perception. The main negative perception which cuts across almost all the institutions was that librarians acquire and keep intellectual contents of authors; hence, they are not meant to abide by laws backing intellectual property. This is against professional ethics as stated by Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2013). These results have implication for LIS curriculum developers in Nigeria and Africa to include Information Ethics as a compulsory course in all library schools. Also IE should be included as topics for discussion at conferences and seminars. This is necessary because the respondents indicated that they were not taught specific courses on IE while in library schools.

Also, the study revealed professional codes of ethics to be practiced by librarians. These, among others include: guarantying the user access to available information resources regardless of the medium; respect intellectual rights of authors and right of users to privacy, except where it is in the public interest and should not share confidential information; and provide the highest level of service through courteous, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance by users. These align with Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) (1995) and CILIP (2013) that Librarians should promote inclusion and not discriminate against any library user; respect for diversity within society; and concern for the good reputation of the information profession. Since these codes are designed based on core values of librarianship, these elements are of ethical study not only on the basis of universal principles, but also regarding cultural differences and geographical singularities. This means education and training be organized by designated bodies in the profession to enlightened librarians in higher institutions on handling ethical dilemma while providing information services. To this end, there is need for well documented toolkit to guide the activities of librarians when faced with such dilemma.

On level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians, the test of norm was used; the scale 1 – 21 shows that the level was low; 22-42 shows a moderate level of practice. The overall mean for practice of Information Ethic by librarians surveyed was 28.52 which fall between the scale “22 - 42”. This means the level of practice of Information Ethics by librarians in higher institutions in Oyo State was moderate. However, some ethics were highly practiced than others; this also varies from one higher institution to the other. For example, the result revealed that librarians go beyond the limit of what they can photocopy from a material in their libraries. This has implication for the violation of copyright and Intellectual Property Rights of authors and may subject library materials to easy deterioration processes.

This finding underscores Igbeka and Okoroma’s (2013) opinion that the degree of practicability of many of the ethical codes is very questionable and that there has not been any case of confrontation and sanction in connection to the violation of the ethical values. This result raises both professional and scholarly concern that, both high positive and negative perceptions of Information Ethics have resulted in moderate (as revealed by data) and low (as observed) practice of IE. This result has implication for service quality and users’ satisfaction in the library. Another issue about this result is that it will not promote good image of information profession to the users whom librarians are trying to retain in the face of advances in Information and Communication technologies (ICTs). Consequently, strict adherence to professional codes of ethics through campaigns, trainings, and orientation should be ensured by Library regulating bodies in Africa, and Nigeria specifically.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS**

The study was designed to investigate perception and practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. The findings of this study revealed librarians’ high positive and negative perceptions of Information Ethics with moderate level of practice, as well as codes of ethics required to be practiced by librarians. Efforts should be made to ensure that librarians adhered strictly to them. This is necessary because Information Ethics ensures users’ satisfaction through service quality. As made known, there is no significant relationship between perception and practice of Information Ethics by librarians in four higher institutions surveyed. Since the level of practice of Information Ethics was lower than its perception by librarians in the institutions examined, factors responsible for this would form

areas for further research. Consequently upon the results, the following recommendations are made:

1. Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria LRCN and other regulatory bodies in Africa should ensure that efforts and strategies are put in place to all librarians in Nigeria who were not taught Information Ethics while in library schools, this will enhance their perception of information profession in changing society.
2. Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and Nigerian Library Association (NLA) should intensify her efforts in promoting professional codes of ethics among librarians in Nigeria. This should be done using all avenues, e.g. formal classroom settings, conferences, seminars, and others. This will aid librarians' productivity and job performance.
3. Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) should work hard and team up with other African library schools and regulatory associations to ensure that Information Ethics is fully included as a course in the LIS curriculum. This will make librarians in Africa well equipped and be ready to confront any ethical issues that may arise in the course of professional activities.
4. Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) should draft and enforce legal actions against any librarian who is guilty of any unethical practice in Nigerian Libraries irrespective of their type, or services they render. This should be embraced by NLA both at National and State chapter level

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