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Information Sources, Trust and World War: Libraries' Role in Preventing Wars

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Abstract

This research sought to investigate the roles of libraries in preventing wars, as well as students' sources of war information, trust and the likelihood of future world war. A descriptive survey design was used in the investigation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Of the 295 survey respondents, Instagram was found as the most preferred source of information on wars while libraries were the least source. When it came to war information, traditional news channels, libraries, and other social media platforms were considered to be trustworthy. A large number of students feel that future world wars are likely and that libraries will play a crucial role in preventing them. The study concluded that libraries can play critical roles in preventing wars. As a result, the study recommends that libraries begin to provide more resources and services that are promote peace. This can help to prevent future wars.

Keywords: *World Wars, Information Sources, Trust, Libraries*

Introduction

There have been two world wars, which had a terrible impact on the world from the beginning of the twentieth century until the present. World War I altered the global economic balance, leaving European countries deeply in debt and establishing the United States as the world's main industrial power and creditor. In most nations, inflation skyrocketed, and the German economy suffered greatly as a result of having to pay for reparations. During World War I, an estimated 8.5 million combatants and 13 million civilians died (Britannica, 2022; History, 2022).

The Second World War lasted from 1939 to 1945 and was one of the most significant transforming events of the twentieth century, claiming the lives of 39 million people in Europe alone. Six years of ground fighting and airstrikes devastated a large amount of physical capital. Many people were compelled to abandon or give up their property without recompense in order to relocate to other regions. Even in relatively rich Western Europe, periods of hunger were increasingly regular. For extended periods, families were separated, and many children lost their dads. Many people, including youngsters, saw the horrors of war as fights and bombings took place in their neighbourhoods (Kesternich et al., 2014).

However, in recent times, the conflict in Ukraine has opened the debate about the likelihood of another world war. Russia, one of the world's major military powers, attacked Ukraine, and since then, major cities have been decimated and resulting in the exodus of millions of Ukrainians to neighbouring countries. Western nations have responded to the war with harsh

sanctions that hurt not only Russia but also other nations implementing the sanctions. Since then, the sanctions have resulted in global inflation and food shortages. This predicament has forced the need to research measures to avert a future world war, which, if it occurs, would wreak massive havoc like the world has never seen before. One way to avert a world war is to educate people with timely information that will allow them to make sound judgments when confronted with a crisis. Libraries, being a reliable source of information, can be useful in this case. As a result, the study sought to determine if libraries may play a role in averting wars.

Methods

The descriptive survey research design was used in the study to separate the essential components of the phenomenon of interest. The survey research design was ideal for this study because it gave an accurate and trustworthy portrayal of libraries' role in war prevention. The study population includes 3457 Adeleke University undergraduate students. According to the Taro Yamane formula, the research sample size is 359. The researchers used a self-created structured questionnaire named "Wars, Sanctions, and Inflations." A questionnaire is useful because it can reach a large number of people while also gathering data quickly and cheaply. The questionnaire's face validity was assessed by an expert in the field of information management. To ensure that the sample group gave an accurate response, some questionnaire items were altered in response to suggestions/observations. A few components were altered and clarified as a consequence of the expert's suggestion, while others with the same meaning were omitted. Undergraduates at Adeleke University in Osun State, Nigeria, were given 359 copies of the validated instrument. Respondents were assured that any information they provided would be kept completely secret and used for research reasons only. Such information was likewise not made available to a third party. However, a total of 295 copies of the instrument were obtained, resulting in an 82 percent success rate. The analysis of this study comprised all 295 respondents. The collected data was organised and analysed using descriptive statistics. To answer the study questions, descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation scores were employed.

Taro Yamane formula for sample size

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

- n = Sample size
- N = Total population and
- e = Error tolerance (0.05).

$$3457 / (1 + 3457(0.05^2)) = 358.5$$

= Approximately 359

Results and Discussions

Table 1 - Demographic information of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Age Group		
11-15	8	2.7
16-20	174	59.0
21-25	67	22.7
26-30	21	7.1

31 & above	25	8.5
Total	295	100.0
Gender		
Female	159	53.9
Male	136	46.1
Total	295	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	246	83.4
Islam	49	16.6
Total	295	100.0

Findings in Table 2 show that majority of the respondents were female (59%). Most are Christians (83.4%) within the age group of 16 -20 (26.4%). This demographic shows a young study group who are expected to suffer the most if a world war should take place.

Table 2 – War Information Sources

Category	Always	Often	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std D
Online Newspapers	99(33.6%)	90(30.5%)	78(26.4%)	28(9.5%)	2.88	0.984
Libraries	29(9.8%)	79(26.8%)	129(43.7%)	58(19.7%)	2.27	0.888
Liberal News stations e.g. CNN	76(25.8%)	110(37.3%)	81(27.5%)	28(9.5%)	2.79	0.934
Conservative News stations e.g. Fox News	6(23.1%)	98(33.2%)	98(33.2%)	31(10.5%)	2.69	0.943
Local News Stations e.g. Channels	71(24.1%)	117(39.7%)	86(29.2%)	21(7.1%)	2.81	0.884
Blogs	100(33.9%)	112(38.0%)	58(19.7%)	25(8.5%)	2.97	0.936
Religious leaders	60(20.3%)	84(28.5%)	116(39.3%)	35(11.9%)	2.57	0.944
Radio	81(27.5%)	104(35.3%)	81(27.5%)	29(9.8%)	2.80	0.952
Facebook	90(30.5%)	95(32.2%)	67(22.7%)	43(14.6%)	2.79	1.036
YouTube	89(30.2%)	95(32.2%)	82(27.8%)	29(9.8%)	2.83	0.973
Twitter	104(35.3%)	89(30.2%)	70(23.7%)	32(10.8%)	2.90	1.008
Instagram	119(40.3%)	95(32.2%)	56(19.0%)	25(8.5%)	3.04	0.966

According to the results of table 2, Instagram is the most preferred source of information on wars among students. This is followed by blogs, Twitter, online newspapers, YouTube, local news stations, radio, liberal news stations such as CNN and Facebook, conservative news stations such as Fox News, and religious leaders. The majority of students did not utilise libraries to get information on wars. The findings of this study agree with Nielsen et al (2020), who discovered that most young people prefer social media to traditional news sources for their daily news. Nelson et al. in line with the current study discovered that Instagram, in particular, was the most popular source of news among young people. The explanation for students' lack of usage of libraries for war information might be because of their increased interest in online newspapers and social media (Adetayo, 2021; Cheney et al., 2006).

Table 3 – Trustfulness of War Information Sources

Category	Highly Trustful	Trustful	Untrustful	Highly Untrustful	Mean	Std D
Online Newspapers	111(37.6%)	140(47.5%)	33(11.2%)	11(3.7%)	3.19	0.777
Libraries	75(25.4%)	175(59.3%)	39(13.2%)	6(2.0%)	3.08	0.680
Liberal News stations e.g. CNN	145(49.2%)	119(40.3%)	26(8.8%)	5(1.7%)	3.37	0.716
Conservative News stations e.g. Fox News	110(37.3%)	148(50.2%)	31(10.5%)	6(2.0%)	3.23	0.714
Local News Stations e.g. Channels	100(33.9%)	154(52.2%)	37(12.5%)	4(1.4%)	3.19	0.697
Blogs	56(19.0%)	128(43.4%)	90(30.5%)	21(7.1%)	2.74	0.846
Religious leaders	56(19.0%)	133(45.1%)	95(32.2%)	11(3.7%)	2.79	0.788
Radio	97(32.9%)	149(50.5%)	41(13.9%)	8(2.7%)	3.14	0.748
Facebook	75(25.4%)	112(38.0%)	84(28.5%)	24(8.1%)	2.81	0.911
YouTube	73(24.7%)	133(45.1%)	77(26.1%)	12(4.1%)	2.91	0.815
Twitter	101(34.2%)	124(42.0%)	61(20.7%)	9(3.1%)	3.07	0.817
Instagram	93(31.5%)	124(42.0%)	65(22.0%)	13(4.4%)	3.01	0.845

The findings of this study found that students trust both liberal and conservative news stations the most when it comes to information relating to wars with a mean of 3.37 and 3.23 respectively. The trust in conservative news stations such as Fox News is particularly surprising given that students in Nigeria only have access to it via the internet, unlike CNN which is available through satellite dishes. Others trusted war information sources include online newspapers, Local News Stations e.g. Channels, Radio, libraries, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Religious leaders, and Blogs. As seen in this study, Libraries are more trusted than social media platforms when it comes to sourcing information about wars. The reason for this could be because libraries are known to be an objective source of information unlike social media which has been questioned in recent times due to the explosion of fake news (Adetayo, 2022; Durodolu & Ibenne, 2020).

Table 4 – Support for Fact-Checking Websites

	Frequency	Percent
No	39	13.2
Yes	256	86.8
Total	295	100.0

Fact-checking websites have grown in popularity as a result of the proliferation of fake news on social media. However, in a world full of different people, some believe that fact-checking is unnecessary. Against this, this study found that the majority (86.8%) support fact-checking websites. This is supported by Rich (2020), who found that majority of the public support fact-checking social media.

Table 5 – Likelihood of a World War in the future

	Frequency	Percent
Extremely Unlikely	13	4.4
Unlikely	67	22.7

Likely	117	39.7
Very Likely	98	33.2
Total	295	100.0

During the Ukraine crisis, there has been heightened concern over the risk of another world war. According to this study, the majority of people (39.7 %) believe that a future world war is likely, while 33.2 % say that a future world war is highly likely. Others (27.1%) believe future world war is either improbable or highly unlikely. These findings are in agreement with Rosenfeld (2022), who noted that many commentators are worried that the escalating conflict in Ukraine may trigger World War III. The study's findings indicate that people all across the world do not feel safe as a result of ongoing tensions between the world's economic superpowers in recent years.

Table 6 – Roles of Libraries in Preventing World War

Categories	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std D
Providing books about consequences of wars	154(52.2%)	113(38.3%)	24(8.1%)	4(1.4%)	3.41	0.699
Providing literacy education about wars	146(49.5%)	128(43.4%)	19(6.4%)	2(0.7%)	3.42	0.643
Providing news resources about peaceful nations	157(53.2%)	120(40.7%)	17(5.8%)	1(0.3%)	3.47	0.621
Holding a yearly library event celebrating peace	118(40.0%)	128(43.4%)	43(14.6%)	6(2.0%)	3.21	0.764

The study's findings, as shown in table 6, suggested that libraries can play important roles in averting future world wars. The providing of news materials about peaceful nations was shown to be the most beneficial role libraries may play, with a mean of 3.47. This is closely followed by the provision of literacy education about wars and books about war's repercussions, with a mean of 3.42 and 3.41, respectively. Another role that was found that libraries can play in averting wars is hosting a yearly library event dedicated to peace, which has a mean of 3.21. This finding is consistent with previous library experience during World War I, when the St. Louis Public Library served a broad population and provided a range of services to children and adults throughout the war, both before and after the United States entered the war. (Kimball, 2007).

Conclusions

The study concluded that libraries can play critical roles in preventing wars. Libraries can provide news about peaceful nations, literacy education about wars, books about the consequences of war, and hold a yearly library event dedicated to peace to help in preventing future wars. Instagram was found as the most popular source of information on wars among students, while libraries are the least popular. Traditional media sources such as liberal and conservative news stations, online newspapers, local news stations, and radio are highly trusted, although libraries, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, religious leaders, and blogs are also trusted. Most students feel that a future global war is likely, even though previous

world wars had severe impacts on the public. As a result, the study recommends that libraries begin to provide more resources and services that are unfavourable to wars. This can help to prevent future wars.

Implications of the study

The study has policy and practise implications. As valuable materials have been destroyed in ancient libraries, libraries have often bore the brunt of war's devastation. As illustrated in this study, libraries have important responsibilities to play in averting wars; they do not have to wait until a war occurs before becoming concerned. Libraries must rethink their policies and include libraries' roles in averting wars into them. This would allow libraries to transform the way they conduct their profession by offering users with news materials about peaceful nations and literacy instruction about wars on a regular basis. This will allow library patrons to be continually surrounded by a peaceful mindset, which will ultimately spread to the society in large. Libraries must do everything they can to guarantee customers are up to speed on the effect of war on society, whether through books or library events outlining the cost or effects of wars, so driving them to do what they can to stop conflicts.

Conflict of interest: None

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