

A REVIEW OF INNOVATIVENESS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of innovativeness as a personality trait and characteristic necessary for librarians in universities. A conceptual approach through a review of related literature was adopted. The review was developed to understand librarians' innovativeness based on openness to a new experience, willingness to take risks and adaptation to change. This paper found out that for libraries to succeed, the librarian's technical and moral competencies needed to meet the library user's demand must be directed towards being innovative. Findings also revealed that there is a need for university library management to provide the necessary infrastructure that can improve the innovativeness of librarians such as regular power supply, and regulating the cost of access to the internet. Findings from this study will identify the current state of the librarians in universities' innovativeness. The implication of this study for library professional associations will draw insights to develop appropriate policies and strategies that will increase librarians' willingness to let out innovative ideas towards positioning the Nigerian academic librarianship in the global world. The extent of innovativeness of librarians offers some crucial insights on educating librarians through training, seminars, and workshops on the need to be innovative and enhance the librarian's creative capacity, level of interaction, cooperation, and trust. This study will further encourage scholars to further research innovativeness, especially in the librarianship field in Nigeria. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by helping to affirm the assumptions of the theory used in the study. It contributed to existing knowledge conceptually because the dimensions discussed can be useful to future researchers.

Keywords: adaptation to change, innovativeness, openness to a new experience, university libraries, willingness to take risk

Introduction

Innovativeness is an attribute exhibited by both organisations and individuals willing to try new concepts and methods for better results. It involves rethinking the ways individuals did things and being ready to increase and advance for a positive output. The level of innovativeness in any organisation could make or mar the

achievement of such an organisation in the current dynamic and highly competitive business environment. Some people are more innovative than others for various reasons. For some, creativity and originality brought about their innovativeness, others because of their adaptation to change, or their willingness to try new things. Other causes could include an opportunity for career advancement, the

amount of expertise gained with the job at hand, good communication and feedback system, incentives, and leadership styles (Jantz, 2012). When employees are innovative, they become resourceful self-starters, independent thinkers, and have a high creativity capacity (Doran & Ryan, 2017).

Innovativeness in employees aids any organisation's success because they serve their users more by providing dynamic solutions to persistent problems. Innovativeness in employees could increase productivity and performance in their organisation by creating new processes, making them more motivated and involved in the organisation. Innovative employees are an asset to any organisation and could be classified as knowledge workers. Ilo, Idiagbeyan-ose and Adebayo (2015) and Umar (2016), revealed that the major factors that could lead to low innovativeness included lack of infrastructure, lack of e-equipment, erratic power supply and majorly lack of funds. Abubakar and Attahir (2018) observed that individuals are not innovative because they have not confronted the challenges of accepting and responding to the changing nature of higher education. In this study, innovativeness can be discussed using three dimensions: openness to experience, willingness to take risks, and adaptation to change (Kilicer & Odabasi, 2013). Based on this, this study will look at the concept of innovativeness, the overview of openness to a new experience, adaptation to change, willingness to take a risk and a theory of innovativeness.

Concept of Innovativeness

The concept of innovativeness has been extensively studied by scholars (Oscarsson, 2003; du Preez & Louw, 2008, Ganzer et al., 2021). Kilic, Ulusoy, Gunday and Alpan (2015) described innovativeness as an open-minded attitude toward change combined with an awareness of the need to innovate. According to Wang and Ahmed (2004),

innovativeness is defined as an organization's ability to introduce new products to the market, or open up new markets, through strategic orientation paired with innovative behaviour and processes. Hult et al. (2004) noted that innovativeness can encourage firms to launch new products and enhance existing product lines while expanding a firm's general scope. Likewise, firms' innovativeness has to do with their "openness to new ideas as a part of a company's culture" and their willingness to integrate new strategies such that they can become new products and launch new services (Calantone, Cavusgil, & Zhao, 2002; Tsai & Yang, 2013; Voeten, 2015). Therefore, innovativeness reflects the values and beliefs of the firm, which encourages its employees to be creative and innovative (Staniewski, Nowacki, & Awruk, 2016). Kijkasiwat and Phuensane (2020) also said that innovation has some relevance for organisations; it can generate additional revenue, help to save costs, and improve the quality of existing processes.

As a behavioural characteristic, innovativeness can be dictated by how swiftly an individual, or another unit of adoption, adopts new ideas relative to the others (Rogers, 2005). The ability to generate innovative ideas or the ability to combine existing elements to create new sources of value is considered innovativeness, while receptivity to innovative ideas is considered a characteristic of innovation (Baykal, 2018). The organisation's ability to buy new products reflects its innovativeness in providing services (Ganzer et al., 2021). Behaviour-related concepts imply that innovativeness in an organisation begins with the desire to try something new, and then moves to service delivery. Overall, innovativeness is the spark for creating new processes, services, or products (Kilic, Ulusoy, Gunday & Alpan, 2015; Voeten, 2015; Staniewski, Nowacki, & Awruk, 2016; Tsai & Yang, 2013). Therefore, employees should intensify their efforts to

enhance the innovative capability of their companies to sustain the remarkable performance of their companies (Hult et al., 2004).

Studies tried to identify other antecedents of innovativeness. For example, Peng (2018) examined the relationships between job involvement, leader-member exchange, and public librarians' innovative behaviour. The findings show that Leader-member exchange was a significant moderator of the job involvement–innovative behaviour relationship. Another study by Batra and Vohra (2016) explored a crucial but less-understood antecedent of innovativeness in individuals – cognitive style. They drew attention to the employees' differences in grasping and transforming experiences that significantly influenced their innovativeness. Individuals whose mental experiences are characterised by philosophical concepts and active experimentation are more likely to exhibit innovativeness than individuals with cognitive backgrounds characterised by concrete experiences and deliberate observation. The study also revealed that an understanding of the employees' cognitive style could help managers allocate appropriate individuals to various tasks and that cognition is an essential antecedent of individual innovativeness.

Innovativeness has been conceptualised in two main streams (Midgley, 1977). First, is "innate innovativeness" or innovativeness inherent in a person's naturally inventive personality, a disposition to current concepts and intellectual style (Midgley & Dowling, 1993; Hirshman, 1980). Goldsmith and Foxal (2003) termed it "global innovativeness". Midgley and Dowling (1978) define global innovativeness as "the degree to which an individual makes innovation decisions independently from the communicated experience of others. The second stream of innovativeness is called the "Domain-Specific

Innovativeness (DSI)". DSI measures an individual's innovativeness within a domain. Robertson (1971) first introduced the notion that consumers can innovate among products within a particular environment. An individual can innovate across fields, as well. Innovativeness in employees is often studied in the context of diffusion of innovation, particularly relating to consumers and their willingness to adopt innovative new products (Abbas, Nawaz, Ahmad & Ashraf, 2017) and the propensity of organisational members to seek external knowledge (Tortoriello, 2006). This study will adopt the conceptualisation of Hurt, Cook and Joseph (2013) that focuses on innovativeness in terms of how an employee perceives and reacts to new ideas, inventions, or ways of doing things and his/her propensity to improvise, generate original ideas, and accept challenges. (Hurt, Joseph, & Cook, 2013). This is in line with Hurt, Joseph and Cook (2013), the values and the dominant characteristics of innovativeness conceptualised for this study include adaptation to change, openness to new experiences, and willingness to take a risk.

Adaptation to change

An organisation is sustainable when it adapts and progresses when it has well-defined strategies to implement new ideas, methods and processes and convert internal and external dynamics into advantages. This approach requires flexibility and focus on the employees in a comfortable working environment, adequately adapted to the operational needs and modern change. According to Niessen, Swarosky and Leiz (2010), adaptation to change occurs when individuals without fear or reluctance accept change in their surroundings. Dabic, Potocan, Pavicic and Nedelko (2019) found individuals' values such as openness to change the strong impact of innovativeness. Individuals who adapt to change make use of friends and neighbours as information sources. They are

often powerful, well prepared, and smart. Their significant distinction is that they do not remain in place, asking more questions, even after the opinion leaders' move. They are found not enrolled fully in a change or transformation effort. They love the attention. Indeed, attention-getting fuels their adaptation (Goldenberg & Oreg, 2007).

Openness to a new experience

Openness to a new experience is another characteristic of innovativeness. Openness to a new experience implies being imaginative, curious, original, broadminded, cultured, intelligent, and artistic (Tan, Lau, Kung, & Kailsan, 2016). People who are high on openness are fascinated by new ideas and creativity. They enjoy things that are new, different, and surprising. They are also more likely to pay attention to their feelings and inner experiences. They are at the forefront of creating new technology/products. According to Ekechukwu and Nwineke (2016), individuals with a high level of openness to a new experience are creative and intelligent. Such individuals give great attention to mental imagery, are interested in new things, enjoy hearing new ideas, and think about abstract concepts. They are usually more liberal and open to diversity, interested in artistic endeavours and adventurous. Researchers have consistently linked openness to experience to creativity as a personality factor (Batey, Furnham, & Safiullina, 2010; Grosul & Feist, 2014; Jauk, Benedek, & Neubauer, 2014; Tan et al., 2016). Openness to a new experience is one of the dimensions of the five-factor model of personality. Javed, Khan, Arjoon, Mashkoor and Haque (2018) suggest that openness to experience is positively related to innovative work behaviour.

Ali (2019) defined openness to new experiences as the extent to which individuals exhibit intellectual curiosity, self-awareness, and non-conformance. Nekljudova (2019) identified the distinctive qualities of each of the features that stand out in openness to a

new experience. They include openness to action, openness to ideas, openness to values, openness to aesthetics, openness to imagination and openness to feelings. An individual's participation in something new characterises openness to action. A high level of openness to ideas in individuals shows greater flexibility in "information processing". Openness to values is the degree of a person's susceptibility to change. Openness to aesthetics is the ability to evaluate various forms of art, but this aspect does not apply to assessing particular types of art. Openness to fantasy is also strongly associated with a person's tendency to be involved in fiction, which includes a developed picture of thinking and a high level of creativity. Openness to feelings is associated with people who appreciate emotions, are more sensitive to emotional events, and experience most emotions.

Openness implies an appreciation of art, emotion, adventure, usual ideas, imagination, curiosity and a variety of experiences. They are more creative and sensitive to emotion. They also tend to hold unconventional beliefs. However, an individual may have a high level of openness and an interest in learning about and exploring new cultures without being too interested in art or poetry. One characteristic of the open cognitive style is the ability to think in symbolic abstractions for renewal of experience. Conversely, people with low openness scores are the opposite. Their habits are always the same, they avoid trying new things and they probably tend to rant the most. Changing personalities is usually regarded as a challenging process due to which they tend to be pessimistic, but openness is a malleable trait change in adulthood.

Willingness to Take Risk

Reiners, Murphy, Bartolome and Wood (2016) defined risk-taking as a behaviour that involves the chance of a positive outcome and a negative consequence. Risk-taking has been a vital component of innovativeness (Hurt,

Joseph & Cook, 1977; Roger, 2003). Willingness to take risks allows individuals to take risks and decrease their fear of change, making it an essential factor in inducing innovativeness in individuals (Jung, Kang & Choi, 2020). Employees who take risks are innovators known as the "venturesome" (Roger, 2003). They are actively seeking information about new ideas and are ready to try new ideas. This readiness makes them inquisitive, and as such, the kind of relationship they keep is the kind that brings them out of their local circle. This venturesome nature can also mean daring and being ready to take any risk (Roger, 2003). Risk-takers come up with novel and useful ideas, and they do that irrespective of their expertise, job title and occupational background. Risk-takers are creative, nonconformist, and curious and tend to have a hungry mind. Ajani and Oluyemi (2016) listed some of the risk-takers characteristics to include divergent thinking, insatiable curiosity, infectious passion, stamina, effective leadership, and respect for other innovators.

Theory on Innovativeness: The Individual Innovativeness Theory

The individual innovativeness theory is a sub-theory of the diffusion of innovation theory propounded by Everett Rogers in 1995. According to this theory, some individuals are more innovative than others are, and for this reason, will adopt an innovation earlier than most of the group. This implies that individuals may have a higher or lower level of innovativeness than others. The reaction of the individual towards innovation, a new idea or a new technology differs because of the differences in individual innovativeness. Roger classified adopters of new technologies into five different categories based on the time of adoption. The five categories are innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. While Rogers established the framework to categorise an

individual, the theory does not suggest or explore what characters measure an individual to be innovative or not, but this study wants to explore additional information about an individual to understand the level of his or her innovativeness fully.

Kilicer and Odabasi (2010) built on this theory but viewed innovativeness as an individual personality trait and not as Roger classified them. Kilicer and Odabasi described the dimensions of innovativeness as opinion leadership, openness to new experience, risk-taking and change-resistant. However, change-resistant does not reflect how innovative an individual may be. Hence, Hurt et al. (2013) suggest adaptation to change, openness to new experiences and willingness to take risks as measures of innovativeness and can be used for empirical study. Based on the theory, adaptation to change as a characteristic is found in individuals who approach innovation sceptically and cautiously, and they do not adopt an innovation until most others in their social system have done so. It is an action taken by people when they perceive that a change is occurring, and they willingly accept it. They must be convinced that innovation has favoured others before they embrace the new idea. Their point of reference is usually in the past.

Openness to new experiences is a characteristic found in a person that is willing to adopt a new idea before the average individual of a social system. They interact many times with their peers but do not often hold leadership positions. Before individuals who are open to new experiences ultimately adopt a new idea, they may be deliberate in making a late decision for some time. Their innovation-decision period is relatively more extended than that of the opinion leader. (Ali, 2019) Individuals are willing to take risks, are inquisitive, and very eager to try new ideas. Their inquisitiveness directs them out of their

local social networks into more glamorous social networks. They create friendship and good communication irrespective of the distance. There are, however, initial conditions in being a risk-taker. One of which is their ability to cope with the high degree of uncertainty about innovation at the time that the innovation occurs (Roger, 1995). Risk-takers are daring and are always ready to launch a new idea into the system.

Librarians' Innovativeness in University Libraries

Individual innovativeness theory is relevant to innovativeness. The various dimensions of innovativeness; adaptation to change, openness to new experience and willingness will serve as constructs that will measure innovativeness. An organisation like the university library is driven by quality service delivery. If librarians exhibit any or some of these dimensions, there is a tendency that university libraries will perform better or otherwise. The various dimensions can distinguish an employee's innovativeness in an organisation and affirm that individuals have different degrees in the rate at which they innovate or are ready to innovate. This will guide the leadership of the university on how to attain success when they want to embark on any innovative projects. It is assumed that university libraries would achieve high success rates of innovation with a very minimal level of resistance and this will increase performance if the degree of innovativeness is high among employees.

Innovativeness could be a major challenge in the success of organisations including university libraries in Nigeria. Ilo, Idiagbeyanose and Adebayo (2015) and Umar (2016), revealed that the major challenges militating against the libraries of the various schools and institutions in Nigeria included lack of infrastructure, lack of e-equipment, erratic power supply and majorly lack of funds, all of which were some of the factors that could

make librarians uninnovative. However, Akwang (2017) noted that the constraints to innovativeness in university libraries in Nigeria include a lack of autonomy and lack of collaboration among library and information science schools and other relevant departments. He further stated that some of the differences in the library programme structure in Universities could pose a significant challenge.

Onuoha, Anyanwu, Ossai-onah and Amaechi (2015) examined the challenges of promoting innovation and creativity among library and information science professionals in Nigeria using the experience of selected libraries in Imo state. Their findings revealed the challenges include lack of ICT skills, lack of innovative and creative skills, poor working environment, suppression of creative ideas by senior colleagues and inadequate finance to develop technological facilities. The researchers revealed that openness to experience, creativity, and originality served as a strong influence on librarians' innovativeness in Imo state. In addition, Onuoha, Anyanwu, Ossai-onah and Amaechi (2015) found that library and information science professionals in Nigeria are innovative and creative, especially in resource organisation, e-resources management, CD-ROM management services. Bari, Fanchen and Baloch (2016) asserted that innovativeness was at a satisfactory level in universities.

Research has shown diverse opinions on innovativeness in university libraries (Atata, Oji & Tom, 2014; Radwan & Pellerini, 2010). Chisenga (2002) identified some factors that constitute the low degree of innovativeness in University libraries as inadequate technology infrastructure, poor working environment and lack of computers, networks and bandwidth. Omeruo (2013) pointed out that employees are faced with a lack of innovation culture, lack of reward, lack of good leadership style, poor

working conditions, motivation, poor funding, brain drain, infrastructural deficiency, knowledge gap, poor ethical standards and different levels of malpractices, lack of trust amongst others.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The ability to think creatively is a critical skill for today's workers. The exceptional librarian cannot overlook the wide spectrum of innovativeness that provides organizations with unbreakable benefits. Through the findings of this study, the federal government, state government and private-owned institutions should see the need to ensure that appropriate socio-economic amenities, infrastructures and right decisions that can enhance the innovativeness of librarians in universities are in place. The review of librarians' innovativeness is expected to make a significant contribution to the existing conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature. The following are thus recommended:

1. The federal government, state government and private-owned universities in Nigeria should provide the necessary infrastructure that can improve the innovativeness of librarians such as regular power supply, and regulating the cost of access to the internet.
2. The federal government, state government and private-owned universities in Nigeria should provide motivation when ideas and creativity are displayed.
3. National library associations in Nigeria should oversee the process of chartering librarians to ensure that certified librarians are innovative in terms of skills and competencies.

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