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CAREER PROGRESSION IN LIBRARIANSHIP: AN EXAMINATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES, CHALLENGES AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies on career progression have focused largely on employees in business and corporate organisations, with comparatively little attention given to library personnel. In Nigeria, there is a dearth of literature on the career progression of librarians. This study therefore examined career progression among library personnel in federal universities in South-West Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted, while the total enumeration technique was used to cover the entire population of 223 library personnel. The instruments used for data collection were the Career Progression (CP) ($\alpha = 0.77$), Career Development Programmes (CDP) ($\alpha = 0.79$), and Challenges to Career Progression (CCP) ($\alpha = 0.79$) scales. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the most highly rated aspect of career progression was its potential to earn library personnel recognition in society (88.7%), while the greatest challenge was the irregular conduct of promotion examinations (60.5%). The quality of career development programmes was rated high (Grand Mean = 3.09). The study concluded that career progression among library personnel in federal universities in South-West Nigeria was affected by identifiable structural and administrative challenges. Therefore, library management should address these challenges and consider staff perspectives to enhance career progression and improve productivity.

Keywords: Career development programmes; career progression; library personnel; federal university libraries; South-West Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The constant changes at the organizational level have elevated the importance of managing people at work, and in particular, the planning and management of their careers (Martin et al., 2023). Arguably, people are the most valuable resource in contemporary organisations, and providing them with long-term and stable career opportunities benefits both organisations and employees. Clearly, a career is not merely a job but encompasses a process, attitude, behaviour, and situation in an individual's work life aimed at achieving career goals. A career can be described as a developmental concept comprising a combination and sequence of an individual's work-life experiences and how the individual perceives these experiences in relation to what they do (van der Merwe et al., 2024).

Career progression is an important aspect of organisational life. Employees who view their employment as a career are often motivated to advance and attain higher levels of professional achievement (Mofokeng et al., 2025). Career progression prepares individuals for increased responsibilities and helps them acquire the skills and competencies required for future roles within the organisation (Lingham, 2008). Consequently, opportunities for advancement contribute to professional fulfilment, while career stagnation may lead to dissatisfaction and reduced motivation (Donaldson, 2010; Lingham, 2008).

Career progression is also associated with positive employee attitudes and organisational outcomes. Positive perceptions of career advancement opportunities have been linked to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intention (Ahn & Choi, 2023). Similarly, employees who perceive opportunities for career growth tend to develop stronger organisational attachment and more positive work attitudes (Peiris, 2024). Recent studies further suggest that employees are more engaged when organisations provide visible pathways for career advancement and professional growth (Ahn & Choi, 2023; Peiris, 2024). Consequently, effective career development systems can contribute to employee retention, commitment, and organisational effectiveness.

Beyond its influence on employee attitudes, career progression contributes to organisational performance and adaptability. Many junior employees perceive senior management positions as indicators of career success because of the opportunities they provide for leadership, visibility, and organisational influence. Career progression strategies embedded in human resource practices can help organisations respond more effectively to change, improve customer service, and enhance performance through a more empowered workforce. Hard work, talent, knowledge, and the acquisition of academic or professional qualifications can all contribute to career advancement (Career Guide, 2013).

Career progression involves several interrelated processes, including recruitment, training, promotion, skill development, and salary advancement. Organisational human resource management begins with recruitment, and strategic recruitment and selection processes enable organisations to identify individuals with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics required for effective job performance (Phillips, 2021). Promotion and salary increases are important aspects of professional growth and are often used by organisations to reward productivity and encourage greater employee commitment (Ng et al., 2024). Likewise, opportunities for career growth, promotion, and professional development contribute positively to employee engagement and organisational commitment (Zhu & Song, 2022).

Training and professional development constitute essential components of career progression. Employee development initiatives, including workplace training, enhance competencies and contribute to professional growth (Jehanzeb, 2020). Similarly, Mullins (2007) noted that training and professional development facilitate employee progress by improving individual and organisational competence and creating opportunities for career advancement. Training and experience have also been identified as important predictors of career management and promotion opportunities (Lazim, 2015). Furthermore, employees who perceive clear opportunities for career advancement report higher levels of job satisfaction and lower turnover intention (Ahn & Choi, 2023; Peiris, 2024).

Within the library profession, continuous training and professional development are particularly important for career advancement. Librarians and other library personnel require ongoing development to improve their qualifications, experience, and readiness for promotion and greater responsibilities. Such development enables institutions to rely on experienced and competent personnel in achieving organisational goals. Librarianship is a competitive profession that requires dedication, continuous learning, and professional growth. Recent evidence indicates that career advancement in academic libraries is influenced by professional development opportunities, institutional support, and structured career pathways (Margam & Pandey, 2025). Similarly, experience gained during the early stages of librarians' careers contribute significantly to professional growth, career development, and long-term progression within the profession (Park et al., 2026).

Federal university libraries in Nigeria typically employ three categories of personnel: professional librarians, library officers, and support staff. Professional librarians are required to possess a Master's degree in Library and Information Science or an equivalent qualification and perform professional and administrative library functions, with opportunities for progression to senior management positions. Library officers typically possess diploma-level or related qualifications and perform technical library duties under the supervision of professional librarians, progressing through the library officer cadre based on experience and institutional requirements. Support staff provide auxiliary services that facilitate the effective operation of the library.

In view of the staffing structure in federal university libraries, career progression becomes a critical issue for staff development and organisational effectiveness. Although career progression has received considerable attention in business and corporate settings, comparatively little empirical attention has been given to library personnel, particularly within the Nigerian context.

Consequently, there is limited evidence regarding how library personnel perceive their career progression, the quality of career development programmes available to them, and the challenges that may hinder their advancement. This gap is important because career progression can influence employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational effectiveness. Against this background, this study examined how library personnel assess their career progression, the quality of career development programmes available to them, and the challenges affecting their career progression in the six federal universities in South-West Nigeria.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do library personnel assess their career progression in federal universities in South-West Nigeria?
2. What is the quality of career development programmes in federal university libraries in South-West Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges to the career progression of library personnel in federal universities in South-West Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of data on the opinions, perceptions, and experiences of library personnel regarding career progression, career development programmes, and challenges to career progression in federal university libraries in South-West Nigeria.

The population of the study comprised 223 library personnel, consisting of 122 professional librarians and 101 library officers, in the six federal universities in South-West Nigeria. The total enumeration technique was adopted to cover the entire population of 223 personnel because of its relatively small size. This approach is consistent with Bryman (2006), who noted that total enumeration is appropriate when the study population is relatively small. The technique ensured that every member of the population had the opportunity to participate in the study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising three scales: Career Progression (CP), Career Development Programmes (CDP), and Challenges to Career Progression (CCP). The items were adapted from relevant literature and modified to suit the objectives of the study. The CP Scale contained 10 items measured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The CDP Scale contained 10 items measured on a four-point rating scale of Very Good, Good, Average, and Poor. The CCP Scale contained six items measured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The instrument was subjected to content validation by experts in Library and Information Science at the University of Ibadan. The experts examined the clarity of the items, appropriateness of language, and relevance of the contents to the objectives of the study. Their observations and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted using 30 library personnel at Ekiti State University, which was not included in the study population. Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency of the scales. Reliability coefficients of 0.77, 0.79, and 0.79 were obtained for the Career Progression (CP), Career Development Programmes (CDP), and Challenges to Career Progression (CCP) scales, respectively, indicating acceptable reliability.

For data collection, contact was established with at least one professional librarian in each of the federal university libraries. The questionnaire was administered and retrieved with the assistance

of research assistants over a period of four weeks. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided.

The data collected were coded, entered, and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 20. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, were used to answer the research questions.

RESULTS

Questionnaire Administration and Response Rate

A total of 223 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents. Of these, 177 copies were returned and found usable for analysis, representing a response rate of 79.4%.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do library personnel assess their career progression in federal universities in South-West Nigeria?

The results on library personnel's assessment of their career progression are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Assessment of Career Progression among Library Personnel

S/N	Statement	SA		A		D		SD		
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1.	I feel I have already achieved all I want to achieve in my career.	10	5.6	24	13.6	77	43.5	66	37.3	1.88
2.	Training is important to my career development.	103	58.2	42	23.7	9	5.1	23	13.0	3.27
3.	I want to work in a higher-level position.	111	62.7	34	19.2	16	9.0	16	9.0	3.36
4.	There is opportunity for me to develop my career in my organisation.	78	44.1	65	36.7	18	10.2	16	9.0	3.16
5.	I am enjoying steady career progression in my establishment.	52	29.4	67	37.9	35	19.8	23	13.0	2.84
6.	My career progression will lead me to self actualisation in my establishment.	85	48.0	59	33.3	17	9.6	16	9.0	3.20
7.	I am very satisfied with my career progression.	32	18.1	96	54.2	39	22.0	10	5.6	2.85
8.	There is no clear-cut career path in my place of work.	31	17.5	22	12.4	82	46.3	42	23.7	2.24
9.	My career progression will assure me of my achievement on the job.	84	47.5	73	41.2	10	5.6	10	5.6	3.31
10.	Career progression will earn me recognition in society.	94	53.1	63	35.6	10	5.6	10	5.6	3.36

KEY: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strong Disagree

The highest-rated items ($\bar{x} = 3.36$) were that career progression would earn library personnel recognition in society and that respondents would like to work in a higher-level position, as indicated by 88.7% and 81.9% of the respondents, respectively. Similarly, 88.7% agreed that

career progression would assure them of achievement on the job ($\bar{x} = 3.31$), while 81.9% considered training important to their career development ($\bar{x} = 3.27$). In addition, 81.3% believed that career progression would lead to self-actualisation in their establishments ($\bar{x} = 3.20$), and 80.8% agreed that opportunities existed for career development within their organisations ($\bar{x} = 3.16$). Conversely, the lowest-rated item was the statement that respondents had already achieved all they wanted in their careers ($\bar{x} = 1.88$), with 80.8% expressing disagreement. Overall, the respondents exhibited a positive assessment of their career progression, with a grand mean score of 2.95, which exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50.

Research Question 2: What is the quality of career development programmes in federal university libraries in South-West Nigeria?

The results of the assessment of the quality of career development programmes in federal university libraries in South-West Nigeria are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment of the Quality of Career Development Programmes in Federal University Libraries in South-West Nigeria

S/N	Career Development Programme	Very good		Good		Average		Poor		
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1	On the job training	36	20.3	24	13.6	79	44.6	38	21.5	2.33
2	Training courses and seminars	78	44.0	82	46.3	15	8.5	2	1.1	3.33
3	Study leave with pay	64	36.2	88	49.7	14	7.9	11	6.2	3.16
4	Study leave without pay	41	23.2	23	13.0	75	42.4	38	21.5	2.38
5	Gaining experience in a range of tasks	99	55.9	56	31.6	19	10.7	3	1.7	3.42
6	Demonstration of skills and ability	104	58.8	54	30.5	14	7.9	5	2.8	3.45
7	Feedback on career development needs	29	16.4	76	42.9	53	29.9	19	10.7	2.65
8	Access to mentoring	83	46.8	78	44.1	2	1.1	14	7.9	3.30
9	Staff working co-operatively	139	78.5	12	6.8	21	11.9	5	2.8	3.61
10	Involvement in designing and preparing training programmes	97	54.8	34	19.2	35	19.8	11	6.2	3.23

Staff working co-operatively ($\bar{x} = 3.61$) received the highest rating among the career development programme indicators, with 85.3% of the respondents rating it as either good or very good. Other highly rated aspects included demonstration of skills and ability ($\bar{x} = 3.45$), gaining experience in a range of tasks ($\bar{x} = 3.42$), training courses and seminars ($\bar{x} = 3.33$), and access to mentoring ($\bar{x} = 3.30$). Most of the career development programme indicators were rated above the criterion mean of 2.50. However, on-the-job training ($\bar{x} = 2.33$) and study leave without pay ($\bar{x} = 2.38$) scored below the criterion mean. In contrast, approximately two-thirds of the respondents rated these two aspects as average or poor. Overall, the grand mean score of 3.09 exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that the career development programmes available in the federal university libraries were generally of high quality.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges to the career progression of library personnel in federal universities in South-West Nigeria?

The challenges to the career progression of library personnel are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Challenges to the Career Progression of Library Personnel

S/N	Challenges	SA		A		D		SD		
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1	I do not have the necessary qualification(s) for career progression.	10	5.6	21	11.9	62	35.0	84	47.5	1.76
2	I do not have the necessary experience to enhance my career progression.	15	8.5	30	16.9	41	23.2	91	51.4	1.82
3.	I prefer to stay in my current job position.	10	5.6	11	6.2	60	33.9	96	54.2	1.63
4	I have no desire to work in a higher-level position.	1	0.6	20	11.3	50	28.2	106	59.9	1.53
5	I do not desire to take on additional responsibilities at work.	10	5.6	11	6.2	61	34.5	95	53.7	1.64
6	Promotion examinations are not conducted as and when due.	84	47.5	23	13.0	58	32.8	12	6.8	3.01

The greatest challenge to the career progression of library personnel was that promotion examinations were not conducted as and when due ($\bar{x} = 3.01$), with 60.5% of the respondents agreeing with this assertion. This was the only challenge that recorded a mean score above the criterion mean of 2.50. Conversely, the respondents generally disagreed that lack of qualifications ($\bar{x} = 1.76$), lack of experience ($\bar{x} = 1.82$), preference to remain in their current positions ($\bar{x} = 1.63$), lack of desire to work in a higher-level position ($\bar{x} = 1.53$), and unwillingness to assume additional responsibilities ($\bar{x} = 1.64$) constituted challenges to their career progression.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Career progression is an important aspect of personnel management in university libraries because it influences employees' professional growth and has implications for the quality of services rendered. Previous studies on career progression and development in libraries have examined issues such as continuing professional education, automation, job responsibilities, and workplace conditions (Malcom, 2009; Margam & Pandey, 2025). The present study contributes to this body of knowledge by examining library personnel's assessment of their career progression, the quality of career development programmes available to them, and the challenges affecting their career progression in federal university libraries in South-West Nigeria.

The study found that library personnel generally exhibited a positive assessment of their career progression, with a majority (72.3%) indicating that they were satisfied with their career progression. This finding is consistent with that of Leysen and Boydston (2009), who examined the job satisfaction of cataloguers in Association of Research Libraries (ARL) libraries in the United States and found that a large proportion of the librarians were satisfied with their careers and would choose the profession again. However, this finding differs from the report by AsiaOne (2012), which indicated that most respondents in Singapore were dissatisfied with their career progression.

The study found that the career development programmes available to library personnel were generally of high quality. Training courses and seminars, as well as access to mentoring, were rated positively by approximately 90% of the respondents. This finding supports the position of Dargham (2010), who argued that organisations should contribute to employees' career progression by providing opportunities for self-development and facilitating career growth through training, mentoring, workshops, and seminars. Such initiatives are considered important for

employees' professional growth and advancement. Similarly, Mullins (2007) maintained that training promotes continuity in staff development by improving employees' competencies and creating opportunities for career advancement and promotion.

The findings underscore the importance of providing library personnel with opportunities for career progression. The generally favourable assessment of career development programmes suggests the need for libraries to sustain and strengthen structured career development initiatives, including skills acquisition programmes, on-the-job training, promotion opportunities, and appropriate remuneration. In support of this position, Chen, Chang, and Yeh (2004) argued that career development programmes promote professional growth and career advancement, and that organisations that invest in such programmes are more likely to enhance employees' satisfaction with their career progression.

The irregular conduct of promotion examinations emerged as the greatest challenge to the career progression of library personnel. This finding is consistent with Kostea (2010), who suggested that promotions can serve as effective mechanisms for encouraging positive employee behaviour. Kostea (2010) further noted that employees' job satisfaction may remain high when workers perceive promotion opportunities as attainable and timely. Similarly, Möhring et al. (2025) found that increased earnings have a significant positive impact on work satisfaction, although the effect may be temporary, while Husain (2026) reported that academic librarians in both smaller and larger libraries expressed relatively low satisfaction with promotional opportunities. These findings highlight the importance of timely and transparent promotion processes in sustaining employees' motivation and satisfaction.

Conclusion

The study concluded that library personnel in federal university libraries in South-West Nigeria generally assessed their career progression positively and perceived the available career development programmes to be of high quality. However, the irregular conduct of promotion examinations emerged as the major challenge to career progression. The findings highlight the need for library management to sustain and strengthen career development programmes through training, mentoring, skills development, and opportunities for professional advancement. Management should also ensure timely promotion processes and take into consideration the views of personnel to facilitate career progression and enhance productivity in university libraries.

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