Provision of Information Services to the LGBTQ Community: Perspective of Public Libraries in Kenya

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Abstract:- UNESCO has had a very significant role to play in the development of Public Libraries and Information Services in developing countries. UNESCO's charter of the book and information resources has become the torch bearer of its zeal for the development of public libraries. The charter in its preamble states the essence of book and information resource; their role in preserving, diffusing, and disseminating of knowledge. This calls for promotion of free flow of information by word and image to the information seekers to realize the objective of UNESCO i.e. peace, development and promotion of human rights to all; access and provision of information should be to all regardless of age, race, gender, religion, nationality, language or status. Public library should be establish edunder the law with respect to all human rights toserve the information and educational needs of all types of readers without any distinction. Specific services and materials especially to those who are the minority must be provided for. Users such as LGBTQ category who cannot for whatever reason use the regular services and materials should be considered. Materials and service provided should include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. Public libraries should function as a place for freedom of information and the collection and services should not be subjected to any form of ideology, political or religious censorship. Access to information is basically a human right which should be upheld by all information managers in public libraries. Service provision should not be discriminative, and equality should be held to every user including the minority such as the LGTBQ who for some reason may not be able to use mainstream services. UNESCO emphasises that the importance of enlisting the help of this minority group of users in selecting of information materials in public libraries to ensure that it reflects their interests. The paper discusses the role of public library in the promotion and provision of information service to the minority, group specifically LGBTQ community.

Keywords:- *Public Libraries, UNESCO, Minority Users, LGTBQ, Information Services.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Information organizers have an ethical and professional duty to provide information to all patrons without judgment. The American Library Association's Bill of Rights and Code of Ethics calls on libraries and libraries to provide all people with resources and services regardless of their background or views. Similar ethical advice is also being issued by North American professional library organizations to ensure equal library services for all.

Libraries are important information sources for marginalized populations, such as the LGBTQ community, and they may help young people by giving them information about coming out, gender identity, and sexuality. Nonetheless, a lot of LGBTQ users are unwilling to ask for help from library staff for fear of discrimination or judgment during a reference conversation.Despite the generally courteous and professional behavior of librarians, unintentional implicit bias may have an impact on the reference relationship. Nonverbal cues such as smiling when interacting with members of a group that is positively seen or hesitating to speak or keeping a physical distance when interacting with members of a group that is adversely rated might reveal implicit biases. Being the target of such hostile nonverbal cues may ruin a reference interview, which also explains why many LGBTQ individuals are reluctant to contact the reference desk in the first place.Regardless of a patron's gender, sexual orientation, or identity, when a request is about something sexual, the fear of being judged frequently takes precedence over the need for help.

Not much study has been done on the needs and perspectives of academic librarians in relation to the LGBTQ community, even though societal attitudes toward LGBTQ people are becoming noticeably more accepting and open. A growing body of literature has been published exploring the perspectives of LGBTQ library patrons. By assessing librarian viewpoints on these questions and the variables that may affect their comfort and confidence in responding to such requests, the authors of this study hope to offer a more comprehensive knowledge of LGBTQ information requirements.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- To explore the provision of information services to the LGBTQ community by public libraries in Kenya
- To evaluating the level of inclusivity within public library policies concerning LGBTQ community.
- To examining the challenges faced by public libraries in Kenya in providing adequate information services to the LGBTQ community.
- To assess the impact of these information services on the well-being and empowerment of LGBTQ library users.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Librarians limited access to sexual content in their libraries during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, acting as moral police in their communities. After the Library Bill of Rights was enacted in 1939, librarians' parental role became less strict in the middle of the 20th century as more libraries acquired contentious and sexual literature while also making an effort to serve everyone impartially. Despite this progress toward tolerance, many library employees and users still view LGBTQ materials with stigma.

LGBTQ individuals face several obstacles when trying to use library resources. A significant portion of the material that has been published on library services for LGBTQ users has concentrated on the requirements of users and the different institutional and interpersonal hurdles that may impede those needs from being satisfied. These hurdles are mapped out in Pierson's recent analysis of the literature; some are unique to collections and their descriptions, but the rest have to do with public services for customers who identify as LGBTQ.The literature provides examples of potential barriers based on the following: geographic location (e.g., distance from a library in rural communities), interpersonal factors (e.g., body language and verbal tone), affective factors (e.g., library anxiety and fear of outing oneself), and societal conditions (e.g., homophobic actions and anti-LGBTQ legislation).

A significant number of works has been published about materials and collections, including the groundbreaking studies by Whitt, Joyce and Schrader, and Creelman and Harris that examined how public library collections were serving the information requirements of lesbians and gay people. Early publications, however, tended to concentrate more on how easily accessible and helpful the library's resources were. Seminal research that examines the quality of public services looks at gay and lesbian youth reference services offered by public libraries. In this Curry study, a college student pretended to be a younger adolescent and went up to various reference desks asking for book recommendations on how to form a gay-straight alliance in high school. Although the student proxy reported encounters that were largely good, some of the observed people also responded in a shockingly negative way. Curry's study is remarkable as it is among the first to focus on LGBTQ client reference services. It did not, however, seek to ascertain the reasons behind the librarians' provision of good or poor services; instead, it concentrated on the client experience. It was also situated in ordinary libraries rather than university libraries.

To ascertain how often students and professors in LGBTQ sexual diversity programs in various Canadian institutions used the libraries and how satisfied they were with the resources available, Lupien conducted a survey with an emphasis on academic libraries. Almost three-quarters of the respondents identified as LGBTQ. The findings showed that 38.5% of the participants had consulted library staff members on LBGTQ-related issues, and while they were generally pleased with the comfort level of the librarians, they also thought that further training on LGBTQ information resources could be necessary. Respondents who did not use reference services did so out of a sense of self-disrespect or a fear of prejudice or criticism. In more recent times, Wexelbaum has talked about the academic library's function as a "safe space" and a source of academic assistance for LBGTQ students, in addition to serving as an information resource and increasing student retention.

Gender identity is categorized under the LGBTQ umbrella along with sexual orientation in almost all the literature about LGBTQ library information services and collections. Nonetheless, a recent study on the requirements and experiences of transgender library users reveals that many of them are reluctant to utilize reference services due to negative experiences in the past, anxiety about prejudice, or ignorance at the reference desk.

The authors were unable to locate any published studies on the prejudices and motives of academic librarians with relation to queries and users of LGBTQ reference services. Nonetheless, a few related research that offer some insights are found in the health sciences. Healthcare professionals exhibit implicit biases for patients who share their sexual orientation, according to research by Sabin et al. using sexuality data from Harvard's Implicit Association Test (IAT). Subsequent research has shown that while looking for information, LGBTQ librarians are preferred by LGBTQ healthcare practitioners.Despite a shortage of research, it appears that LGBTI library users are inclined to think that LGBTQ librarians will provide them with better, more culturally sensitive service than non-LGBTQ librarians. Some explanations for this could be that LGBTQ librarians are less likely to have prejudice against members of their own community, that they may feel more at ease discussing LGBTQ issues and are less shocked by questions about sexuality, and that they have more firsthand experience with LGBTQ issues from their own lives. This is not to argue that non-LGBTQ librarians cannot offer first-rate reference assistance; rather, it is to raise the possibility that librarians who share a similar social identity may be automatically and implicitly preferred.In this exploratory study, the authors will attempt to determine the comfort levels of academic librarians with LGBTQ-themed questions and resources and to ascertain which factors might influence their comfort level, either overtly or covertly.

IV. INFORMATION SERVICES

A great deal of information technology has been developed in such a short period of time, Information for all who have access to electronic media at their disposal. Public libraries continue to play an important role in providing information, which has changed fundamentally over the past few years as well as methods of collection, access, and presentation. There are several roles to be played by the public library when it provides information:

- facilitating information access at all levels; gathering and making available local community data, frequently in collaboration with other groups
- instructing individuals of all ages in the usage of related technologies and information

- directing people to the relevant sources of information
- giving impaired individuals the chance to independently access information.
- serving as a portal to the information world by facilitating universal access, therefore assisting in closing the gap that separates "the information rich" from "the information poor."

Dramatic developments in the Internet have been broadly unstructured and uncoordinated. A wide variety of information is available on the Internet and its quality and accuracy varies so much that it is vital for a library librarian to be able to guide users towards appropriate resources which meet their needs.

V. ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries exist in different societies, in different cultures, in different historical contexts, in different technologies and at different stages of economic development. Although in different contexts where they are active, their service delivery has the same characteristics. To meet the needs of various users and their requirements, it mainly provides resources in a variety of media and individual level.

The public library is the local focal point for information, providing users with easy access to all kinds of knowledge and information. Equal access to the services of the library shall be provided for everyone, irrespective of age, race, gender, religion, nationality, language, or societal status. For those users, for example language minorities or people, who may not be able to perform the ordinary functions and materials due to any reason at all, special services and materials shall be made available for example, linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison.

Material of relevance to the needs of all age groups should be found. All types of suitable media and modern technology, as well as traditional materials need to be included in collections and services. It is important to provide the highest quality and relevance for local needs and conditions. At the same time, materials are required to consider developments in technology and society as well as their memories of human effort and imagination. Any form of ideological, political, religious censorship, nor commercial pressures should not be applied to collections and services.

A Public Library, as the name implies, is an institution that provides information to the public at large, meaning a variety of individuals who require the supply of simple goods; recreate reading (in the form of newspapers and popular magazines and fiction) to others who have different kind of needs, and they're all very different.

- Provide education; The foundation and maintenance of public libraries is based on the need for an agency that is accessible to all, providing access to knowledge in printed and other formats to support formal and informal learning. The education process does not end with formal training, and the public library compliments this provision because it is a lifelong activity of most people. This is part of the active support for literacy campaign.
- Provision of Information; The right to have access to an understanding of information is a fundamental human right. Public libraries play a major role in the collection, organization, and exploitation of information to make it available for use by their users, as this age of information is unprecedented in world history. Public libraries have a special responsibility to give access and make them easily accessible in this age of the wide range of information sources. As part of collecting, conserving, and providing information, they act as a memory of the past Access to information on the history of this community as well as individuals. The vital role of public libraries aims to bridge the gap between rich and poor information stateless and in every second, it continues to expand.
- Provide opportunities for personal development; The main function of a public library is to offer users access to the major literature and knowledge collections from all over the world, including society's own resources for their personal development. As a result, there is an opportunity to develop creativity and pursue new interests in accessing works of imagination, knowledge. Public libraries provide useful information for users on the day's survival to communities with high illiteracy rates, social and economic development on basic life skills, adult basic education, and AIDS awareness programs.
- By developing and strengthening the reading habit of children and young people early age; the ability to meet the needs of young people and children by inspiring them. Through the excitement of knowledge. At an early age, public libraries are giving out works of imagination. Users are encouraged to enrich and contribute to society in a way that strengthens their strength and habit of reading.
- Cultural development: Public libraries provide opportunities for cultural activities, organization of cultural programs and ensure that cultural interests are always represented in the library's materials through cooperation with appropriate local and regional organizations. Cultural traditions must be supported by a variety of cultural reflections in the local community, which includes both languages spoken and reading. It will work well to concentrate on cultural and artistic development in the community served by the public library.
- Social development: The public library plays a central role in the communities served by it, and more specifically, there are few places for people to meet, is an instrument of community cohesion. In addition to providing information about leisure topics, the public library serves as an opportunity for people to make informal contacts with other citizens of their communities to gain a positive social experience.
- Function as a place for freedom of information; In a democratic society, public libraries can represent all ranges of human experience and opinions without the risk of censorship. No form of ideology, political or religious censorship, or commercial pressure is applied

to their collection and services. It is a human right that all information managers will be obliged to respect.

- Access to all: A public library's primary purpose is to provide its services to everyone, not just a select set of people in a society. The minority who may not be able to use the mainstream services for any reason can nonetheless access the services offered in their entirety. The idea of universal access serves as the foundation for all planning, including funding service development, designing libraries for the physically unable, and scheduling opening hours. This idea of access for all serves as the foundation for collection growth as well.

- Fulfilling local needs: Public libraries function as locally based services for the benefit of the local community by meeting information requirements and doing so within the framework of the community. The local requirements are the primary focus of both collection development and services, and they are often evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that the organization stays in touch with its clientele. Library managers should periodically monitor societal shifts brought about by changes in demographics, employment, education, and age distribution, as well as social and economic growth.

Depending on the location and time of a given public library, the emphasis will differ significantly from one function to another. Nevertheless, certain people have raised doubts about the future of libraries because of an increasing spread and dramatic development in information and communication technology ICT as well as a changing societal priority. This rapid and very interesting evolution has presented a great challenge to libraries in the areas of information collection and display during recent years. The challenge has been met by many public libraries. We've been taking a thrilling opportunity to help bring users around the world during this electronic revolution. conversation. Potential opportunities and risks exist, but as long as the service maintains the quality that sets it apart from most of its competitors and some electronic information providers, it will be able to thrive and provide the basic needs of both individuals and society.

VI. SERVICES TO COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

The Public Library ought to be positioned in the center of the neighborhood in order to have a big impact on its operations. As a result, the Commission ought to collaborate with various Community groups and organizations. The corporate community, nonprofit groups, and the departments of public administration and municipal government will all be participating. It is reasonable to carry out an assessment of their information requirements and provide them the services they need. Not only will it benefit the concerned organizations, but it will also serve as a real-world example of the benefits of the public library to members of the community, who will probably have an impact on future developments. library assistance.

For instance, many public libraries offer information services to local government officials and staff to demonstrate the value of a public library. In several places in the community where people gather, library services may also be provided. Like metro stations, beaches, formal settlement, or squatters' areas, and the like (Kaul, 1999).

VII. METHODOLOGY

While previous studies show that information resources do exist within public libraries that could address the representational needs of LGBTQ community, this research article hypothesizes that the LGBTQtagged content with the library system's catalogue in public libraries. This survey was approved by the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) where that author was employed at the time the data was gathered. The survey was designed to collect data from participants at various KNLS libraries users and staff. The present paper analyzes results specifically for librarians in publiclibraries.

Likert scales were used in the questionnaire to collect quantitative data, and respondents were also asked to contribute additional information in the form of qualitative data. No personally identifiable information was gathered, and the co-authors were not shown any information that would have allowed responders to be identified. The web-based platform was utilized to administer the survey. Electronic discussion lists established by the Kenya Library Association and associated entities, such as the Reference & User Services Division, were utilized to enlist participants.

After answering multiple demographic questions, participants were asked to use a Likert scale, which ranged from "Never heard" to "Very familiar," to indicate how familiar they were with terminology relating to the LGBTQ community. Respondents were also asked to assess their degree of confidence in meeting LGBTQ information requirements, which served as a general indicator of potential obstacles to the quality of reference services. Using a Likert scale that ranged from "Very uncomfortable" to "Very comfortable," participants were asked to indicate how comfortable they felt answering five scenario-based questions (Table 1; Questions 1–16) in the survey. Wallander discusses the value of scenario-based questions in assessing practitioners' judgment. The survey scenarios were derived from research conducted by Fikar, Keith, and Siegel. The scenarios were modified and, more importantly, expanded to include more contemporary topics, including same-sex parenting and gender transitioning.

Table 1: Scenarios used in survey questions

Scenario	Question Scenario	Tick, Where appropriate	
a. Demographic Information	1. Gender	Male Female Non-binary Prefer not to say. Other (please specify) …….	
	2. Age		
	3. Sexual Orientation:	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Other (please specify)	
	4. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ community?	Yes No	
b. Awareness and Attitudes	5. Are you aware of the information needs and rights of the LGBTQ community?	Very Aware Somewhat Aware Not Very Aware Not Aware at All	
	6. How would you rate the level of support provided by your library to the LGBTQ community?	Very Supportive Somewhat Supportive Neutral Somewhat Unsupportive Very Unsupportive	
	7. Have you received training or resources on LGBTQ issues as part of your library education or professional development?	Yes No	
	8. Do you think your library should offer more LGBTQ-related materials and programs?	Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	
c. Library Services and Resources	9. Have you ever accessed LGBTQ-related materials or services in your public library?	Yes No	
	10. If yes, how satisfied are you with the LGBTQ-related materials and services available at your library?	Very Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Neutral Somewhat Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied	
	Are there any specific LGBTQ-related resources or services you believe are lacking in your library?	Please describe…………… ………………………………. …………………………….. …………………………… ……………………………..	
d. Impact of Information Services	12. In your opinion, how do LGBTQ-related information services contribute to the well-being and empowerment of LGBTQ library users?		
	13. Have you observed any positive changes in the LGBTQ community members who use your library's information services?	Yes No Not Sure	
	14. How can public libraries in Kenya better serve the information needs of the LGBTQ community?		
e. Challenges and Recommendations	15. What challenges, if any, do you perceive in providing information services to the LGBTQ community?	Please describe…………. ……………………………. …………………………..	
	16. What recommendations do you have for		

improving the provision of information services to the LGBTQ community in public libraries?		
Thank you for your participation in this survey. Your feedback is valuable to our research on this important topic		

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

To reach the goal of this study, certain conclusions must be drawn from the analysis and translation of the gathered data. Quantitative data was collected via closed-ended surveys that were checked for completeness and cleaned by looking up data transcription...

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program was used to handle the quantitative data, code it for ease of tabulation, and provide statistics. It was evident that missing values resulting from unresolved inquiries were missing data. After that, a descriptive analysis was done. The main features of the respondents were examined using measures of variance, mean, mode, median standard deviation, and central tendency.

Using the narratives and frameworks provided in the process of creating the research frameworks and study objectives, the idea of qualitative data analysis (QDA) was utilized to extract patterns from thoughts and insights. Content analysis was used to examine qualitative data.

A method for examining respondents' opinions via social interaction is content analysis. In order to evaluate respondents' perspectives and viewpoints about student involvement in enhancing strategic planning and performance in academic libraries, data was gathered and examined. The qualitative data was analyzed by looking for emerging and recurrent themes, and then the tables were used to check the data's content for completeness. This allowed the researcher to better understand the underlying causes and motivations and to offer deeper insights into the research scope.

Framework analysis was also employed in the study, which included familiarization, the identification of a theme framework, coding, charting, mapping, and interpretation of the librarians' input. Nevertheless, narrative analysis was also applied, which included rewriting the tales that respondents had shared while considering the unique circumstances of each case and respondent's unique experiences.

IX. FINDINGS

A total of 220 responses were sent in by Kenyan librarians with LIS degrees approved by the KLA that said they were either employed or volunteering in academic libraries at the time. At most five years ago, many respondents (n=95, 43.2%) had a degree in library and information science.

A. Confident Approach to Meeting LGBTQ Information Needs

Most respondents (87.6%) said that they are not confident in meeting the information requirements of the LGBTQ community, with n=78, or 35.3%, saying "disagree" or n=115, or 52.3%) saying "strongly disagreed." For LGBTQ respondents, this number jumps to 7.3%. The results of independent analyses by age group and Kenyan area show that there is no statistically significant difference in these in-confidence levels across age groups or African regions.

B. Training Needs in Meeting LGBTQ Information Services

Most respondents indicated a less interest in training, both in the quantitative responses and open-ended responses in the "Other" field. However, there was a statistically lower level of interest in training for respondents between the over 40 (in the 40-59 and 60-69 age cohorts) and those in the younger cohorts, with the most statistically significant difference being between the 26-39 age group, and the 60-69 age group. There was statistically significant difference between the cohorts from the four census regions of Kenya.

Local and online training choices were strongly preferred by the participants. Furthermore, 39% of participants expressed a desire to acquire knowledge through digital platforms like lusters. Travel expenses and constrained funds for professional development were mentioned by two respondents as influencing their choice of training. However, a tiny percentage of respondents said they would be open to attending conferences for the purpose of receiving training.

C. Open-Ended Responses

A last, optional question asked more about meeting the information requirements of the LGBTQ community. 98 responses were provided, covering every topic on the survey with a special emphasis on advocacy, training, reference, and collections. The majority of the remarks lacked any pro- or anti-LGBTQ prejudice and had a neutral tone.

About 25% of the responses (n=24) specifically stated their support for the LGBTQ community. In their remarks, several respondents (n=10) revealed that they identified as LGBTQ or that someone close to them was LBGTQ. Sixteen respondents said that their library or other establishment welcomes LGBTQ users, and most of them also mentioned having taken part in Safe Zone training.

On the other hand, just four remarks (n=4) revealed prejudice toward LGBTQ people. Two of the five respondents specifically indicated that they continued to deliver LGBTQ-positive services despite obstacles. Five other respondents also mentioned that they operate in conservative settings, such as states with strong religious affiliations or colleges.

X. DISCUSSION

A. Factors Affecting Librarian Comfort with LGBTQ Information Needs

Exploratory factor analysis suggests that three underlying factors influence how librarians approach LGBTQ information needs, and researcher describe these factors in details. In attempting to ascertain the nature of these three factors, each factor was considered in turn and observed to what extent it affected the response to each scenario for all respondents as a whole, for non-LGBTQ respondents, and finally for LGBTQ respondents. The likely nature of each factor was then inductively ascertained. Following standard guidance, loadings below 0.5 were ignored, and these results are removed from the analysis.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Safe Spaces:** Public libraries often serve as safe and welcoming spaces for LGBTQ information seekers, offering an environment free from discrimination and judgment. LGBTQ users can visit libraries to access information resources, seek information, participate in events, information resources collection development and connect with like-minded individuals.

- **Access to Information**: Libraries strive to provide access to a diverse range of resources, including books, articles, and digital media, which can help educate and raise awareness about LGBTQ information users. By offering LBGTQ+-themed books, magazines, documentaries, and online resources, libraries contribute to reducing stigma and increasing understanding among library users.

- **Collection Development**: Libraries play a vital role in developing collections that reflect the diverse needs and interests of their communities. Many libraries actively seek to expand their LGBTQ collection by acquiring books, movies, and other materials that represent LGBTQ perspectives, orientations, and experiences. This allows individuals to access literature, other information resources and media that resonate with their identities and provides visibility for LGBTQ expertise sources, authors, and creators.

- **Programming and Events**: Public libraries often organize programs, workshops, and events that recognizes LGBTQ culture and provide educational opportunities. These can include author readings, film screenings, panel discussions, and LGTQ history month events. Such programming helps foster a sense of community, promotes dialogue, and encourages acceptance and understanding.

- **Information and Referral Services:** Libraries serve as information hubs, assisting individuals in finding LGBTQfriendly resources and organizations within their communities. Librarians can offer guidance and referrals to support services, counseling, advocacy groups, and community organizations that specialize in LGBTQmatters.

It is worth noting that research on the specific impact of public libraries on the LGBTQ community may vary depending on the region, library policies, and available resources.

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