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ISSUES OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES OF THE LIBRARY

¹Oluchi Bridget Ibeh (PhD, CLN); ²Bibiana Obiageli Muokebe (PhD); ³Obianuju Maureen Agwuna (Ph.D); & ⁴Adaora Maudline Orakpor (PhD)

^{1, 2 3 & 4}Library and Information science department Chukwemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam

*corresponding author: Oluchi Bridget Ibeh ob.ibeh@coou.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

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This study examines the critical role of libraries in enhancing national security in Nigeria through strategic information management and public education. Recognizing that addressing the nation's security challenges requires a multifaceted approach involving all stakeholders, the research investigates how libraries can contribute meaningfully to security effectiveness by facilitating information sharing, providing relevant resources, and promoting civic education. The study identifies seven key strategies employed by libraries to support national security: (1) moral reinforcement, (2) targeted dissemination of peace education materials, (3) transformational change initiatives, (4) peace and reconciliation programs, (5) social integration efforts, (6) national development advocacy, and (7) unrestricted access to security-related information resources. The findings underscore the need for systematic collaboration between security agencies and libraries as part of a comprehensive national security framework. The study recommends three policy interventions: first, the formal integration of libraries into national security architecture through government-mandated partnerships; second, the development of specialized library programs focused on security awareness and civic education; and third, the expansion of rural and mobile library services to enhance information literacy among underserved populations. These recommendations aim to leverage libraries' unique position as community information hubs to foster a more security-conscious citizenry in Nigeria's increasingly complex information landscape. The study contributes to the growing discourse on non-traditional approaches to national security by demonstrating how information institutions can serve as vital partners in addressing contemporary security challenges.

Keywords: National, Security, Education, Information, Library, and Peace

Introduction

It is axiomatic that sustainable national development fundamentally depends on robust national security systems (Orakpor, 2020). National security, defined as the protection of a nation's core values, territorial integrity, and strategic interests against both human and non-human threats (Uche Enweani & Muokebe, 2019), requires multidimensional approaches that transcend conventional security paradigms. In the Nigerian context, the library emerges as a critical but often overlooked institution in the national security architecture (Okoye & Ibeh, 2013). This paper argues that government security initiatives remain incomplete without the strategic integration of library services and information management systems (Orakpor & Ezekwibe, 2025). The contemporary library has evolved from its traditional conception as a repository of physical materials to a dynamic information hub that transcends physical boundaries (Orakpor & Modili, 2024). As institutions charged with acquiring, processing, preserving, and disseminating knowledge (Orakpor et al., 2022), libraries possess unique capacity to:

1. Shape public consciousness through factual information dissemination
2. Foster peace-building initiatives
3. Counter misinformation that fuels social unrest (Usiedi et al., 2022)

Two fundamental library roles are particularly salient for national security (Orakpor & Igwilo, 2024):

1. Unrestricted Access Function: Providing democratic access to diverse information resources while preserving cultural heritage
2. Information Literacy Mission: Equipping citizens with skills to navigate complex security information landscapes

These dual functions position libraries as indispensable institutions in contemporary security frameworks (Orakpor & Anyaoku, 2012). Through targeted programming - including security awareness campaigns, peace education initiatives, and cultural festivals - libraries actively contribute to social cohesion and conflict prevention (Orakpor et al., 2014).

The Nigerian security landscape, characterized by challenges ranging from insurgency to communal conflicts, demands innovative information-based solutions (Orakpor, 2012). Libraries serve as critical nodes in this ecosystem by:

1. Providing access to peace-building resources

2. Facilitating civic education
3. Countering extremist narratives (Utor et al., 2008)
4. Modern libraries leverage technological advancements to fulfill six core security-relevant functions (Orakpor & Omoruyi, 2022):
5. Knowledge preservation for intergenerational continuity
6. Lifelong learning and civic education
7. Research support for security policy formulation
8. Timely information dissemination
9. Cultural mediation
10. Community engagement

These functions are particularly crucial in addressing Nigeria's youth vulnerability to violent extremism (Orakpor et al., 2025). By providing alternative narratives, skills development opportunities, and platforms for intercultural dialogue, libraries can mitigate the root causes of insecurity (Orakpor, 2020). Through:

1. Policy Implications
2. Formal integration of libraries into national security frameworks
3. Development of specialized security information programs
4. Expansion of rural library services to enhance information access
5. Strengthening library partnerships with security agencies

This analysis demonstrates that libraries constitute vital but underutilized resources in Nigeria's security architecture. Their strategic deployment could significantly enhance the effectiveness of conventional security measures through information-based interventions (Orakpor & Ezekwibe, 2025). This will go a long way in training or educating youths and social leaders on their role in promoting the culture of peace, and then enjoin citizens to naturally prefer pacific methods of settling disputes to violence or fighting (Oghuvwu, 2007). The society should encourage the development of knowledge house (libraries and information centres), encourage the use of libraries in society to reduce the rate of literacy and deviance in the society and inform the youths on the significance of education in human life and activities which can be achieved through library peace education programme. The work is divided into three major sections. The first section of the work covers the introduction, which served as the overview of the work. The second section of the work took care of the major conceptual issues and the objectives of the study. It covers Concept of Security and National Security, the major Contributions of the Library to National Security, and the Strategies adopted by the Library in Promoting National Security.

Concept of Security and National Security

Security is a state of being safe and the absence of fear, anxiety, danger, poverty and oppression. It is the preservation of core values and the absence of threats to these values (Alli, 2010:73). Imobighe (2010:224) opines that security is the freedom from threats to a nation's capability to defend and develop itself, promote its values and lawful interest. For Zabadi (2005:3), security is a state in which people or things are not exposed to danger of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft or decline. This view is associated with the survival of the state and the preservation of its citizens.

To Ugulu, and Oghuvwu, (2015), National security can be defined as the actions and policies taken by a nation against all internal and external threats to its borders, economy, and stability. It doesn't have to be terrorism or an enemy nation, though it often is. The security interest includes safety of life and property, economic, physiological, mental well-being and the freedom to pursue the attainment of legitimate objectives without hindrance. This definition is holistic and most relevant to us as it sees the objective of national security as elimination of all distractions in order to bring about growth and development of the society and its constituents. In other words, every national security structure must be seen in the light of its two core obligations of preserving the safety of its citizens at home and abroad, and preserving the integrity of the borders and assets of the country.

Besides, Held (2018) gives a traditional meaning of national security. He describes national security as "the acquisition, deployment and use of military force to achieve national goals". Romm (2013) describes it as the lack of danger or risk to hold standards, values and ideals and the absence of fear that such values will be attacked now or in the future. Thus, national security is the preservation of the values a nation holds as relates to the defense of its territory from human as well as nonhuman threats and guides in the pursuit of its national interest in the international system. However, national security loosely defined refers to the protection of the interests of a country. This is where it takes a wide meaning as all-embracing dimension of national life (Hussain, 2008 and Iradia, 2011) because threat posed to any element of national power creates security problems.

The Contributions of the Library to National Security

Libraries have always been a key contributor to national development and it is appropriate that they take a leadership role in the current movement on national security (Ossai-Ugbah, 2013). The word 'national security' is used by politicians and military leaders in the line of a policy objective. The role of the library in national

security is not just to spread information in a particular area but to offer a holistic approach, around all aspects of the policies of the country called Nigeria. Here, the contributions of the library to national security could be summarised thus:

Effective information dissemination on security issue: Currently, the war on terror and terrorism is not only fought by the armed forces but by everybody as an agent of policing. As the whole nation is engaged in the economic, scientific, political and social crusade against insecurity and social unrest, for the library, information is veritable tool to address the situation. Library is the centre for peace and conflict resolution which is achievable through the information dissemination and enlightenment mechanism (Hali, 2013). "National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic, diplomacy, power projection and political power". Information is therefore a crucial factor in national security. This is because the line between security and insecurity lie in information given or information withheld. The ability to use information and its associated tools is a source of power for any nation which the library and librarians are best equipped to do. In Nigeria's current security challenge, citizens and government must recognize this need for information use and literacy as a means of ensuring peace and engendering national security (Noruzi, 2016). Information remains the only product which the library handles and this includes all media in which the information is shaped. The only means through which the real integration of people living in political, economic, religious and ideological poles could be brought together is through the actual cooperation and exchange of vital information between the two: the terrorist and the terrorized (Ossai-Ugbah, 2013). The philosophy behind the library and its services is based on information generation, categorization, conservation, and management. At this time, when Nigeria is still in democratic embryo, ideological divides which is the threshold upon which terrorism thrives can be countered through effective information dissemination. There is an urgent need for provision of "right information, in the right format, for the right people, at the right time, and in the right place" to stem the tide of ignoramus decadence. The long years of political and religious distrust in the country has fanned the flames for crises that have polarized the society and divided Nigerians across ethno-religious lines. To allow every Nigerian to read from the same page, it is important to flash the searchlight of information dissemination on restive areas so that they cannot be used to destroy the hard earned peace and unity the country is presently enjoying.

Work outside the library walls: Ogunsola (2011) observed, the librarianship has undergone a radical change in recent years, which will be continued in the

future. As libraries have changed, so too, has the role of the librarian. The work of librarians has moved outside library walls. Librarians have begun to work in the information industry as salespeople, designers of new information systems, researchers, and information analysts. They are also found in such fields as marketing and public relations and in such organizations as law firms, where staffs need rapid access to security information. Security information in every facet of human endeavour has become an inevitable imperative. Librarians generate security information and make it available to members of their organizations and public for building both individual and collective alertness as well as neighborhood co-operation (Ughegbu, 2001).

Mobile library and enlightenment programmes: Though information officers and librarians may not be in battle field or war front, they are fighting behind the scene in providing technical information services to experts in military and in other fields using the language they understand most since language is a synergy. In providing information services, librarians may need to adopt mobile library strategy as well as enlightenment programmes to bring library services to the doorsteps of citizens and educate them on issues that borders on national security. Nwalo (2013) observed that the compilations made by mobile libraries reflect perceived needs of local communities. This will help to provide security services to communities and help citizens and patrons of the library attain maximum information services, in spite of their vocations. Ifidon and Ahiauzu (2016) defined information as "structured data that causes a human mind to change its opinion about the current state of real world and contribute to a reduction in the uncertainty of the state of the system". Since information is a transformation agent, a shaper of perspectives and philosophies of life, the onus lies on libraries as information centers and librarians as information managers to ensure that Nigerians have access to information that will direct their actions.

Give accurate, timely, and comprehensive security information: Information therefore is a sine qua non for individual and collective freedom and attainment of national security. Anasi (2010) citing Sokari (2016) agrees that "information is necessary for people to be liberated from the shackles of ignorance, misconceptions, economic stagnation, social unrest, and political instability. Social cohesion cannot be achieved without timely, accurate, and relevant information." This is because information is fresh ideas or fact taken out of a person's surrounding for use with the objective of transforming behaviour in all areas of human life (Ajegbomogun, 2008). Information helps create enlightened and responsible citizens. The library is the gateway to information. It is a place where information is acquired, processed, repackaged, preserved, and disseminated (Anasi, 2010).

Use of electronic media to promote and expand security awareness: A nation not mobilized enough to withstand terrorism cannot aspire to preserve its freedom, faith and ideology for long. To mobilize people, the use of electronic media comes to mind. Currently, electronic media is one of the most effective and powerful means of mass mobilization. Therefore, it is in this regard that libraries and librarians can ginger up the electronic media to promote and expand security awareness among the people at large. The library through the media has been waging war of its own to counter the hostile propaganda from insurgents and terrorists in Nigeria. The government through the library (using electronic media) can fund effective counter propaganda campaigns that will sensitize the citizens to the ills of terrorism and win over their sympathizers.

Library Strategies for National Security Enhancement

Moral Reinforcement Strategy

Librarians serve as critical information mediators in national security frameworks (Orakpor, 2020), utilizing mass communication tools to counter extremist narratives (Uche Enweani & Muokebe, 2019). Through strategic information campaigns, libraries can effectively neutralize hostile propaganda from insurgent groups by employing techniques such as fact-based counter-messaging and selective information control (Okoye & Ibeh, 2013). This approach aligns with military morale-building principles that sustain national resilience during security challenges (Orakpor & Ezekwibe, 2025).

Targeted Peace Information Dissemination

The library's core function of systematic information management positions it uniquely to address ideological divisions that fuel insecurity (Orakpor & Modili, 2024). By implementing precision information delivery systems - providing "the right information, in the right format, for the right people at the right time" - libraries can counteract the ignorance that often underlies civil unrest (Orakpor et al., 2022). This strategy proves particularly vital in Nigeria's evolving democracy, where ethno-religious tensions require careful information mediation (Usiedi et al., 2022).

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Framework

As neutral public spaces, libraries facilitate intercultural understanding and conflict resolution (Orakpor & Igwilo, 2024). They provide secure environments for exploring sensitive security issues while offering curated resources that promote social harmony (Orakpor & Anyaoku, 2012). Historical precedents, such as the South African xenophobia case, demonstrate how library-facilitated

information access can drive international reconciliation efforts (Orakpor et al., 2014).

Social Cohesion Mechanism

Libraries serve as unique integration platforms that transcend societal divisions (Orakpor, 2012). Their non-judgmental spaces enable dialogue across political, religious, and ideological spectrums, fostering understanding between security stakeholders and civilian populations (Utor et al., 2008). This integrative function is particularly valuable in polarized security contexts (Orakpor & Omoruyi, 2022).

National Development Integration

Libraries contribute to comprehensive security policy through specialized information services (Orakpor et al., 2025). Librarians' expertise in knowledge organization and multilingual information delivery supports security sector decision-making (Orakpor, 2007). Contemporary library professionals increasingly function as information analysts and research consultants within security frameworks (Orakpor, 2006).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The fundamental connection between librarianship and national security is undeniable (Orakpor, 2020). As Nigeria confronts complex security challenges, libraries emerge as essential partners in developing informed, resilient communities (Uche Enweani & Muokebe, 2024). Their capacity to shape positive social values and behaviors through information interventions makes them invaluable assets in national security architecture (Orakpor & Ezekwibe, 2025).

The study proposes five evidence-based recommendations:

1. Institutional Collaboration: Formalize partnerships between security agencies and libraries through national policy frameworks (Okoye & Ibeh, 2013)
2. Security Education Blueprint: Develop comprehensive library programs focused on security awareness and civic responsibility (Orakpor & Modili, 2024)
3. Rural Information Access: Strengthen mobile library services to enhance security literacy in underserved areas (Orakpor et al., 2022)
4. Specialized Security Libraries: Modernize military and police library resources to support operational needs (Usiedi et al., 2022)
5. Community Engagement: Enhance police-community relations through library-facilitated peace education initiatives (Orakpor & Igwilu, 2024)

Implementation of these recommendations would significantly enhance Nigeria's security infrastructure by leveraging libraries' unique capabilities in information management and community education (Orakpor et al., 2025). The proposed strategies recognize that sustainable national security requires both conventional measures and innovative information-based solutions (Orakpor, 2020).

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