



ACCESSIBILITY OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC INFORMATION RESOURCES IN PERSONAL ARABIC AND ISLAMIC COLLECTIONS OF BORNO ULAMA IN MAIDUGURI

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Abstract

The objectives of this study is to access the accessibility of Arabic and Islamic information resources in personal collections of Borno 'Ulama and obstacles that they encountered in process of utilizing such information resources in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. Survey research method was adopted for the study. The population of the study involved all preaching Ulama of Borno State, while the sampling population consist of only preachers who are dully registered with the Borno State Ministry of Education. The data collected were processed and analyzed by using descriptive statistic. The main findings shows that most of the Borno Ulama do not allow clienteles to get direct access into their information resources. Most of the Ulama do not render circulation services due to the limited nature of their collections' resources. The study concludes that the information resources of the private collections of Borno Ulama are restricted and underutilized in Maiduguri Metropolis.

Key Words: *Accessibility. Information Resources. Personal Arabic and Islamic Collections. Private Arabic and Islamic library. Borno Ulama.*

Introduction

Accessibility of information resources means getting any needed information deposited in any source of information and utilize it. Since the Borno Ulama cannot get free access and utilize conventional library and retrieve information at their own time, they resorted to establish their Personal Arabic and Islamic Collections to access information resources of their need. In a layman language, the personal collection is called Private library. These collections become indispensable for the Ulama in order to search and retrieve their needed information to solve problems, promote their personal research, teaching, learning, preaching and encourage scholarship in general. The Borno Ulama therefore, collected research, teaching and learning materials need by researchers, teachers and students for their research, teaching and learning purposes. These include textbooks, dictionaries, Manuscripts, journals, e-books, e-journals, newspapers, magazines, etc. The effective system of Islamic teaching and learning therefore, can only depend broadly on the availability, accessibility and utilization of Arabic and Islamic Collections. They are the collections of Arabic and Islamic information resources mostly written by Muslim scholars, which had been and still are very important factors for teachings, learning, and research, as well as preaching the Islamic religion and its social responsibilities. The collections are regarded as their learning laboratory, where the Ulama find their world of knowledge. The collections if accessible, provide them with total learning package required.

These collections therefore, can be regarded as the academic nerves of effective system of Arabic and Islamic system of education. They are usually organized information resources, render



services for maximum accessibility for their users.

Easy accessibility of the collections enables the scholars and their students to look into new ways of learning which can play a vital role that aims at new ambitions result which would be impossible if learning were restricted to the use of direct teaching and slide tablet (Allo) alone without accessing other information resources (Aju, & Karim, 2014). All inputs must be made to access the collections freely in order to provide good learning environment for teachers and students so as to achieve the educational goals. The collections, in addition to playing the vital role of individual reading, guidance and development of Arabic and Islamic educations, they serves as centers for instructional materials. The value of the Arabic and Islamic information provided by the collections are based on the quality of available and accessible information resources which have to be accurate, reliable and complete in given answers to the clientele's enquiry. Thus, the collections do not just make the mandate information resources available and accessible; but such information resources must be relevant to meet the needs of their clientele.

Personal Arabic and Islamic Collections were emerged during the early mission of Islam.

Before Islam, most people depended mainly on oral information transmission. With the inception of Islam however, the oral information system were supported with written documents; the *Quran* and *Hadeeth*, which became the Arabic and Islamic Information Transmission System (Adams, 2003:9). Whenever verses of the Qur'an revealed, Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) would memorized them and communicated them to his companions who would do the same (Denfer, 1985: 38), and wrote them down on various available and accessible materials (Grema, 2017: 13). Thus, since the Prophet's (P.B,U,H) time, some of his companions preserved all the *Qur'anic* verses and *al-Ahadeeth* on various accessible materials. Theses has encouraged the growth and development of the Arabic and Islamic information resources. Many authors began to give copies of their works to mosques and schools to make their work better known, (Surtikanti, 2017 : 225). In a relatively short time a number of personal collections and public libraries appeared in major cities everywhere in the Islamic world.

As Islam expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula, books became information resources and carriers of a unifying Islamic cultural consciousness, and these led to the creation of several categories of library which includes National, public, academic, school, special, Mosques, private libraries as well as personal collections all over the Islamic world (Khan, 2011). In whatever level learning takes place, it is essential to note that information is an indispensable factor in the development of any educational programme. The more accessible the resources the more likely they are to be used successfully. Thus, the functions of these collections are to locate, gather and provide the information resources accessible to users. Despite the above fact, it is lamentable that "in Northern Nigeria many of the Arabic and Islamic Collections are still scattered here and there among Islamic scholars, Mallams, Alkalis, and Emirs (Aguolu, 1989, 23). AS a results, it was discerned from Mahram tradition that the creation of the first office of librarianship (personal Collections) in Borno was realized since the Syfawa dynasty (Ajiri, 2005: 85-90). Hence, this work surveyed the accessibility of personal Arabic and Islamic information resources deposited by Borno 'Ulama in their personal collections, for executing their day-to-day affairs in Maiduguri.

This is highly appreciated contributions, when considering the role played by the Arabic and Islamic information resources in disseminating the real picture of Islam and its education in the state.

The objective of the study

The main aims of this study are to:



1. assess the accessibility of Arabic and Islamic information resources in personal collections of Borno ‘Ulama in Maiduguri.

1. identify the obstacles to access Arabic and Islamic information resources in the Personal collections of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri

Research Question

The study answered the research question:

1. What is the level of accessibility of Arabic and Islamic information resources in personal collections of Borno ‘Ulama in Maiduguri
2. What are the obstacles to access Arabic and Islamic information resources in the Personal collections of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant difference in the accessibility of Arabic and Islamic information resources in personal collections of Borno ‘Ulama in Maiduguri

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant difference in the obstacles to access Arabic and Islamic information resources in the Personal collections of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri

Methodology

Survey Research Design was used for the purpose of this research. This is so because it is a flexible method that allows free flow of opinions, belief and attitudes of the entire population studied (Busha, and Harter, 1980: 54). It also allows combination of technique such as administering questionnaire, interviews with respondents as well as participatory observations (Seltiz, C. W. And Cook, 1981: 92). Thus, assessing the accessibility of Personal Arabic and Islamic Collections of Borno Ulama, certainly required interaction between the researcher and the Ulama (Islamic Scholars) for the purpose of yielding adequate information.

Chosen of the ‘survey’ research design for this study was justifiable, because the study carried out in social environment with a group of people who have had the practical experience with the problem under study (Kerlinger, 1979 : 411). This entails gathering data about the target population through survey, where both primary and secondary sources were examined and analyzed. The target population for this study consists of all the thirty-five (35) preaching Islamic scholars that registered with the Borno State Ministry of Religious Affairs and Special Education (Borno State, 2019). The Borno State’s Preaching Board of the Ministry confirmed and provided the names and address of the thirty-five (35) scholars who are famous public preachers in Maiduguri town as presented in the following table. The researcher therefore adopted all the entire known 35 Islamic public preachers presented by the Preaching Board as the population and are manageable size, so no sampling technique was involved. In order to make meaningful concept, the researcher analyzed the collected data, systematically by the use of descriptive statistics. The results generated from the data therefore, presented in simple tables, frequency distribution and percentages.

Data Analysis and Results

In order to make meaningful concept, the researcher analyzed the collected data, systematically by the use of descriptive statistics. The results generated from the data therefore, presented in simple tables, frequency distribution and percentages.

1. 1 Response Rate

A total of 35 copies of structured questionnaires were produced and distributed randomly to the



target population for completion. Out of the 35 questionnaires directly administered to the target population, the researcher was able to retrieved only 28 copies, which were properly filled; thus represents 80% of the total number of the questionnaires distributed and were found to be useful for the study. Seven (20 %) of the questionnaires were not returned to the researcher, and therefore, they were not been able to be retrieved. All the 28 copies of the questionnaires retrieved were found to be usable, and this size was considered to be a fair representative of the entire 35 target population of the scholars which are randomly scattered in Maiduguri town.

2 Demographic information of the Respondents

Section A of the questionnaire was concerned with demographic background of the respondents. The respondents were asked to provide information about themselves: names and mode of educational background. Thus, the data shows that, out of the 28 respondents, majority 23 (82.14%) of them indicated that they acquired their education by attending both formally established Islamiyyah *Madrassa* (schools) and traditional Islamic schools system (*Makarantan-Allo*). Only 5 (17.9%) observed that they acquired their education by attending traditional (informal) Islamic schools system only (*Makarantan-Allo / Tsanghaya*). All the respondents were males as there were few females practicing *Ulamaship* among the target population in the town. It is important to state here that the large number of the respondents 23, representing 82% of the Ulama are opportune to have passed through the formally established either conventional or Islamiyyah school system, while five of the scholars have not.

3. Accessibility of Borno Ulama personal Arabic and Islamic Collections in Maiduguri

When enquired to know whether the information resources in personal collections of the Borno Ulama are accessible or not? The data generated through the questionnaire shows that, most of the Ulama 80 % answered positively that they access their collections easily. The researcher further sought to know whether or not the Ulama allow other Islamic scholars and their students to access and utilize their information resources freely? The responses revealed that 26 (93%) of the respondents affirmed that they do not allow others to access and make use of their information resources freely, this is because of fear of theft or damaging of the resources. However only two (7%) of the respondents indicated that they allow other scholars to patronize their information resources freely. The procedure of getting access into the personal collections of the Borno Ulama are either through registration of the names and address of the clientele, or by introduction of the clientele by a known Scholar. According to the data gathered, almost all the collections have no catalogue of any kind through which the clientele access their needed resources. The Ulama and their clientele have to check their needed resources directly in the mist of the shelves one by one. Of all the Borno Ulama personal collections covered by this study, there is no single trained librarian to maintain and render professional services to their clientele. Almost all the Collections under study are either under direct control of the *Ulama* or manage by their sons or students.

4 Circulation Services of Borno Ulama Personal Collections in Maiduguri

On whether the Ulama provide circulation services in their personal collections or not?

Five (18 %) of the respondents said that they do not render circulation services. The reason they gave are for the fear of lost, mutilation and mishandling the information resources, while some said that they have insufficient information resources for lending. 23 (82 %) of the respondents however, are on the opinion that they provide circulation services to their users under certain procedures as shown on the following table:



Table 1. showing Circulation Services procedure of Borno Ulama personal Collections in Maiduguri

S/No	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
i	through introduction of users by a known scholar	14	61%
ii	through surrendering of the borrower's items	00	00%
iii	Writing names//addresses of the borrowers	9	39%
	Total	23	100%

Source: Field Work

The data in the above table shows the procedures for borrowing and lending information resources from Borno Ulama Private Collections in Maiduguri. 9 (39%) of the 23 respondents agreed that they lend out their information resources by writing the names and addresses of the borrowers only, while majority 14 (61%) of them indicated that they lend their information resources only through introduction by a known scholar. The findings also reveal that the numbers of books to be borrowed at a time are varied from one scholar to another. Most of the Borno Ulama lend out only two to three books to their clienteles, thus 8 (35%) of the respondents said that they lend out only two books at a time, while another 8 (35%) of them lend out only three books. Two (9%) of the scholars give out four books, while five (22%) respondents out of them said that the number of lend out information resources depends on the number of the available resources to be borrowed. Furthermore, the duration of loaned/borrowed resources varied from one scholar to another. Thus 9 (39%) of the respondents expressed their view that they only lend out their resources for only one week. 7 (30.43%) said that they lend out their information resources for two weeks, and another 7 (30.43) indicated that the duration of lent out information resources depends on the number of the available resources to be borrowed out.

4. 5 Seating Capacity of the Borno Ulama Personal Collections

Most of the Borno Ulama' collections covered by this study, apart from that of Sheikh Sheriff Ibrahim Saleh al- Hussainee private library, which can occupy more than 20 users, all the other personal collections have limited seating capacities of not more than 5 users at a time as shown in the following table:

Table 2. Seating Capacity of Borno Ulama personal Arabic and Islamic collections in Maiduguri

S/No	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
i	2-5	23	82%
ii	5-10	4	14%
iii	10-15	0	0%
iv	15-20	1	4%
	Total	28	100%

Source: Field Work.

From the above table, the analysis of the data shows that many Borno Ulama personal Arabic and Islamic Collections have limited seating capacity. Thus, 23 (82%) of the respondents are with the view that their Private collections' seating capacity cannot exceed 2-5 users at a time. 4 (145%) of the respondents are with the view that their collections seating capacity cannot accommodate more than 10 clienteles, while only 1 (4%) of them answered that the seating capacity of his collection accommodates more than 20 users at a time.



4. 6 Major findings of the Study :

The following findings were based upon an analysis of the data gathered: -

1. The finding shows that most of the Borno Ulama of the study area access their collections easily, but do not allow clientele to get direct access into their information resources because of their privacy nature.
2. The clientele can borrow from these collections through registration of their names and address or through their introduction to the Ulama by a known scholar.
3. Most of the Ulama do not render circulation services due to the limited nature of their collections' resources nor do they possess the necessary skills to process information resources/media.
4. Almost all the personal Arabic and Islamic Collections of the Borno Ulama do not have neither cataloguing, accession register nor any professional librarian to manage the collections or help the users get their needed information resources in time.

Discussion of the Results

The findings reveal that many information resources were found in the personal Arabic and Islamic Collections of the Borno Ulama within the Maiduguri Metropolis. As Arabic and Islamic information resources, the finding agreed with Aman's (1975 : 90-109) statement who says that the Prophet Muhammad's followers consider books as their faithful companions and good guide. It also agreed with the Kensdele's in (Aguolu 1977 :561- 583) study who claimed that in Northern Nigeria, the prominent Islamic scholars, emirs and judicial officers have massive Arabic and Islamic studies information resources. Most of the Ulama confirmed that they access their collections easily because of the information resources were acquired and arranged personally by themselves and relatively small in size. The study however affirmed that some of the scholars do not allow others to access and make use of their information resources freely, this is so because of fear of theft or damaging the resources. Another reason or barrier is the privacy nature of the resources which restricted the Ulama to keep the collections in their bedrooms or parlour. For teaching and learning of any Arabic and Islamic subject successfully, there must be free accessibility of rich collections of Arabic and Islamic information resources, where the scholars and their students learn more by themselves.

The findings further show that none of the Borno Ulama in the town has any idea about any classification scheme in classifying books and other information resources which may lead to easy accessibility of the collections. This is a great barrier to the accessibility of the collections. The findings show that other scholars and students get access to these Arabic and Islamic Collections through registration of names, addresses and the materials to be consulted before some of the proprietors of these private collections allow them to use their information resources. This shows that unknown scholar or student cannot use the collections. In addition to this, if the users want to borrow any resource, the borrower must be known to the scholars or through filing the name and address of the clientele before he /she will be permitted to borrow any resource out of the collections. This finding did not agree with the reviewed literature, where by Arabic and Islamic scholars were free to have access to any type of Islamic libraries either private or public and utilize therein any resources of their choice freely (Mahmud, 1971 : 11-21). Lastly, lack of cataloguing, accession register and professional librarian who manage the collections or help the users get their needed information resources in time is another big barrier to the accessibility of the Personal Arabic and Islamic Collections of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri, Nigeria.



Conclusions

Collectively, rich collections of information resources have been identified in different Personal Arabic and Islamic collections in Maiduguri town. Most of the Ulama access their collections easily because of their relatively small size, while some of the Ulama and their students facing difficulties in accessing the collections in the town. Most of the scholars do not allow others to access and make use of their information resources freely, this is so because of fear of theft and damaging the resources. Another obstacle to access the collections is the privacy nature of the resources which restricted some Ulama to keep the collections in their bedrooms or parlour. Lack of trained librarian to render professional services caused most of the information resources in the personal collections of the Borno Ulama restricted and underutilised.

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