

Information management in Nigerian local government administrative secretariats: A case study of sabon gari local government area of Kaduna State Nigeria

¹ Sulieman Sambo, ² Nasiru Modibo, ³ Abdu Azarema

¹ PhD Research Scholar in Library and Information Science, Career Point University, Kota, Rajasthan, India

² PhD Research Scholar in Public Administration, Career Point University, Kota, Rajasthan, India

³ Postgraduate Student of Public Administration, Career Point University, Kota, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

The paper discusses the way local government secretariats in Nigeria plans, collects, organizes, uses, controls, and disseminates its information. It examines the types of information generated and how they are properly managed. Survey design was adopted for the study and instrument used for collecting data included questionnaire, observation and interview. The data collected were analyzed and interpreted using simple frequency and percentages. From the total of 70 copies of questionnaire distributed, 58 copies, representing 83% were filled and returned. Finally the paper highlights the various major findings of the study and offers some vital suggestions on how the overall information in Nigerian local government secretariats can be well managed for easy retrieval.

Keywords: government, information, local, secretariat, administration, management, resources

1. Introduction

Recently many State Governments in Nigeria uncovered suspected ghost workers in the State Civil Service which comprises of both state and local government and also saved hundred of Millions in one month as a result of the workers' verification exercise. The verification exercise entails workers to submit their information and be there in person which caused undue hardship to workers. This has led to many workers going for over five months without their salaries in various Local Government Secretariats across Nigeria. To reduce this undue hardship, there is a need to manage and organize information of all the workers in these secretariats. Information acquisition is driven by information needs and must adequately address these needs Aguolu (2002) ^[4]. Organizations such as Local Government Secretariat acquired significant volumes of transactional information through their day to day activities within both internal and external environment. At the Local Government Secretariat level, information acquisitions are carried out through various departments in the secretariat. For instance health department acquires information from hospitals, clinics, pharmacies etc within their locality. Similarly, agricultural department acquires information from farmers, agro-allied industries, cooperative societies, extension officers etc. education sectors acquires information from schools and students etc. Thomas and Schubert (2001) observed that successful operation of any organization is highly dependent on how well its generated information is managed ^[14].

2. Information Management

In general term, information management can be viewed as a response to, and a search for new and improved means of controlling the information explosion and the resultant increasing complexity of decision making by improving the flow, control, analysis and the synthesis of information for

decision makers, Frishammer (2002) ^[8]. Six distinct but related information management processes are: identifying information needs; acquiring information; organizing and storing information; developing information product and services; distributing information and utilizing information. This shows that information management is expected to give answers to what information is needed, why information is needed and how it is maintained. Organizations like local government secretariats are open systems that exchanges energy, resources, goods and services within its environment and beyond. One of the most valuable resource of an organization is it information. Information is considered as valuable resources for individual or organization Aguolu (2002) ^[4].

Madu (2004) stated that information management is vital and necessary for the survival and growth of any society, establishment, industrial systems, irrespective of the level of its development. It serves to balance or restructure their operations; obligations, responsibilities, the rights and privileges of people ^[6]. Similarly, Mohammed (2005) acknowledge that information management has effects on how policy makers and managers plan and decide on staffing, finance, production, services, strategic development of their establishment ^[113].

3. Local Government Administration in Nigeria

The idea and practice of localizing government is a universal and age-old phenomenon. In Nigeria, before the emergence of the contemporary state system, governance in all originality was locally or community based. With the emergence of the state system, local government still finds a place in the scheme of things Adebisi (2012) ^[3]. Nigeria has experienced different systems of local government administration since the amalgamation of the northern and southern parts of the country in 1914. There was no unified administration of local

government system in the country prior to independence in 1960. At this period, three (3) regional areas created local governments that were adaptable to their customs and traditions. There was the Native Authority System, which was closely with Hausa-Fulani traditional political system. According to Oyeneye (2002) "In the Southern, Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria, the multiple local government systems practiced in Great Britain was introduced. They established country councils, municipal councils, urban councils; district council etc. each of these councils operated in the areas provided similar services to the people."

He further asserted that, "due to the shortcomings of different local government system Federal Government of Nigeria under the Murtala/Obasanjo's administration affected a new uniform and standardized system of local government in the country in 1976. The reform was meant to restructure and harmonized the functions of local government system in the country where by the federal government became directly involved in the administration of local government by providing policy guide lines to be implemented at the local level"^[10].

However, since 1976 reforms, many local governments as well as state capital were created to bring government closer to the citizens to enable the government fashion out policies and programmes which the local communities required. Also local government secretariats were created to serve as a means of distributing the resources of the country equitably. In Nigeria so far there are more than 774 local governments from 36 states. Ordinarily, local government is supposed to be the third tier of government which enjoys freedom as an independent entity. But in most cases State government don't allow them to have that much level of independence as supported by Eme *et al* (2013) "As a third tier government, all local governments are supposed to be independent. And, because some state governors do not ascribe to this independence, they have done all in their power to ensure the emasculation of the councils so that they can utilize their federal allocations as they like"^[7].

Local government provides a forum for the people to establish developmental associations to resolve their joint communal problems and work together to provide facilities like pipe-borne water, electricity, schools and hospitals which are provided by the central government. It acts as a link between the rulers and the ruled. It also educates people on the policies of the state and federal government. As the third tier of government which Section 7 (1) of the 1999 constitution allows for an elected administration as chairman of the council.

4. Sabon Gari Local Government Area: Brief Overview

Sabon Gari is one of the local Government Area of Kaduna State. It is located in Northern part of the state. It has an estimated population of about 286,871 Census (2006)^[12]. The inhabitants are mostly Hausa-Fulani with other mixed tribes; farming and transportation are their common occupations. Sabon Gari was established during the British colonial rule by the influx of large number of laborers and traders from mostly southern part of Nigeria. These immigrants were mostly Yoruba and Igbo who settled in sabon garuruwa as it is called then due to the opportunities created by railway operations. Sabon Gari local government area consists of 11 wards out of which Sabon Gari and Bassawa are the main District. The

wards are as follow: Samaru, Jama'a, Bassawa, Hanwa, Dogarawa, Chikagi, Muchia, Zabbi, Jushi, Angwa gabas and Bomo wards. Predominant language is Hausa and majority of the populace are Muslims. The administrative secretariat of the local government is situated along Zaria Kano express way in Dogarawa ward it has a staff strength of about 1700.

5. Statement of Problem

However, from preliminary investigation carried out by the researcher, organizations such as Local Government Area Secretariats persistently find it difficult to obtain necessary and timely information needed to support their transactional operations. According to Robertson (2005) information management is an umbrella term that encompasses all the systems and processes within an organization for the creation and use of corporate information. He added that information management, in terms of technology, encompasses systems such as web content management systems, document management, records management, digital asset management, learning management systems, learning content management systems, and many more. Information management, according to him is however, much more than just technology, it encompasses people, processes, and content^[13]. Each of these must be addressed if information management projects are to succeed. Apparently, it seems most of the local government secretariats are not properly coordinating and managing the operational information within their domains. What could be the cause of these problems? Could the information management practices adopted not suitable for effective management of information in the secretariats? It is in the light of the above that the study attempt to examine information management in Nigerian local government secretariats and possibly suggest solutions to remedy the situation.

6. Objective of the Study

The study has the following major objectives:

- 1) To ascertain the types of information generated/acquired in the secretariats.
- 2) To investigate how information is generated and acquired in the secretariats.
- 3) To examine the nature of information resources available in the secretariats.
- 4) To investigate how and why information is managed in the secretariats.

7. Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study covers staff and people of Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna state. The study is limited to staff under personnel department and other staff who are responsible for generating and managing of the secretariats information.

8. Research Methodology

The research method adopted for the study is survey design, Aina and Ajiferuke (2002), argued that, survey design could be conveniently used in large and small population without sacrificing efficiency in addition to time and money saving and currency^[5]. The main instrument for data collection for this research is a structured questionnaire that was distributed among staff of various departments in the secretariat while interview and observation are also used. Data analysis and

interpretation is based on a sample population of 70 staff of the local government secretariat.

9. Data Presentation and Analysis

A total number of 40 copies of questionnaires were distributed to various staff of Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State but 30 were fully filled and returned which means 75% responded. The analysis is based on simple frequency count and percentages.

9.1 What type of Information do you generate?

Table 1: Information generation

Information kinds	No of Respondents	%
Personal information	0	0
Operational information	12	40
All of the above	18	60
Total	30	100

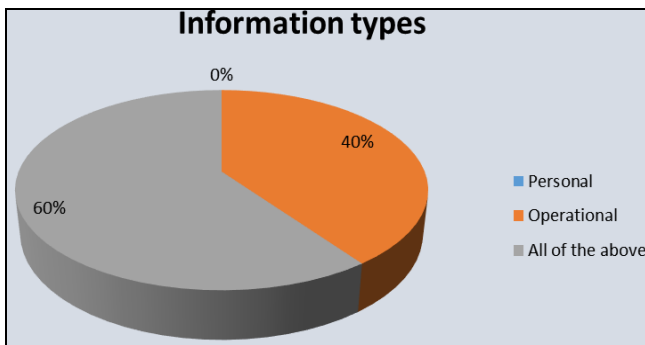


Fig 1: Demonstrating information types.

Table 1 above shows that 60% of the respondents say information is generated for both personal and operational use and 40% says they generate information for operational use only while none of the respondents was for personal only.

9.2 Do you think adequate organizational information helps administrators in local government secretariats?

Table 2: Information organization help

Information organization Help	No of Respondents	%
Yes	28	93
No	2	7
Total	30	100

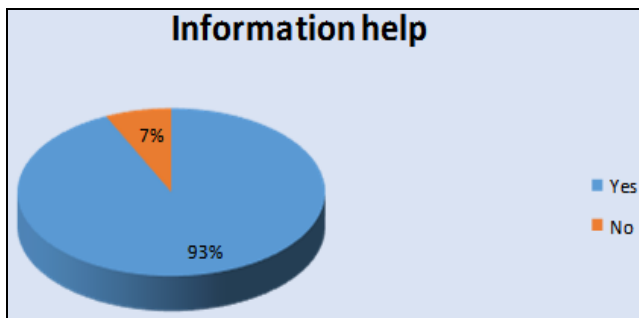


Fig 2: Demonstrating information organization help.

From table 2 above, 93% of the total respondents are of the view that adequate information helps administrators while 7% are of the view that it is not helpful.

9.3 Which of the following is your source of information in the secretariat?

Table 3: Source of information

Information source	No of Respondents	%
Government	4	13
Private individuals	0	0
NGOs	0	0
Communities	0	0
Traditional rulers	0	0
All of the above	26	87
Total	30	100

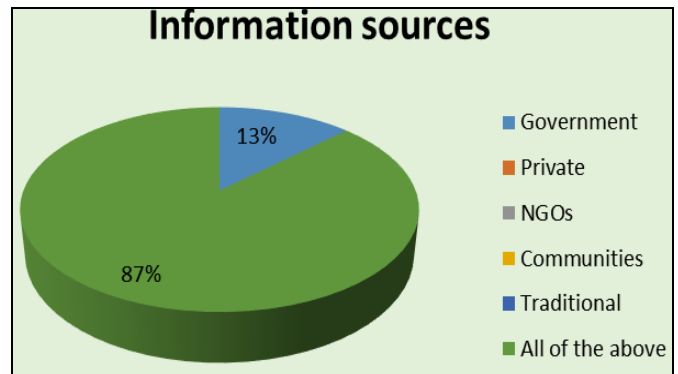


Fig 3: Demonstrating the sources of information.

As shown in table 3 above, 87% of the respondents are of the opinion that all the sources of information mention above are used while 13% go government only as their source.

9.4 How do you organize your information?

Table 4: Information organization

Information organization	No of Respondents	%
Subject	10	33
Alphabetical	2	7
Geographical	4	13
Numerical	0	0
All of the above	14	47
Total	30	100

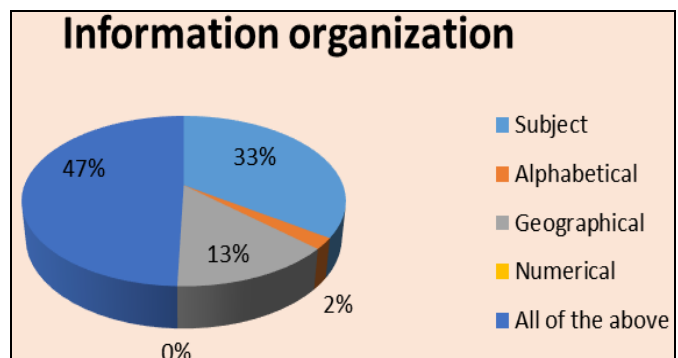


Fig 4: Demonstrating information organization.

Table 4 above shows that 47% of the respondents organize information in the entire format listed above, 33% organize it in subject format while 13% use geographical method only to organize information. Furthermore, 2% organize in alphabetical format only while none organize it in numerical only.

9.5 How easy do you retrieve information?

Table 5: Information retrieval

Information retrieval	No of Respondents	%
Very easy	18	60
Not easy	12	40
Total	30	100

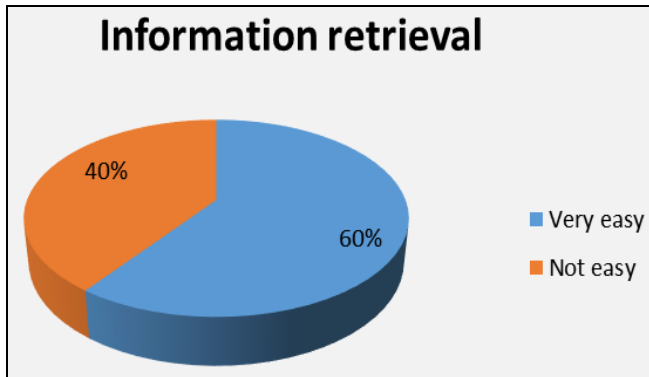


Fig 5: Demonstrating information retrieval.

Table 5 above revealed that 60% of the respondents retrieve information very easy while 40% says it is not easy to retrieve information.

9.6 How do you classify the information?

Table 6: Information classification

Information classification	No of Respondents	%
Urgent & important	8	26
Urgent	0	0
Top secret	2	7
Important	2	7
All of the above	18	60
Total	30	100

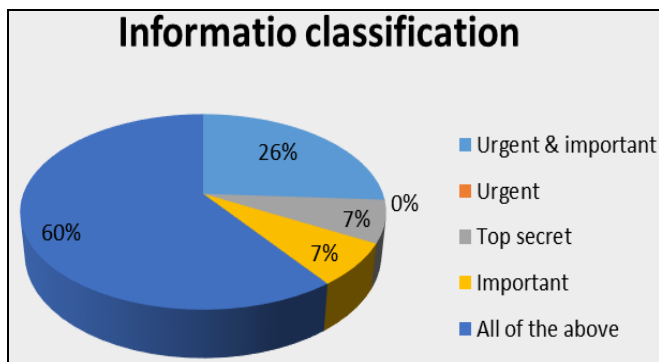


Fig 6: Demonstrating information classification.

In table 6 above, about 60% of the total respondents are of the view that is classified under the entire class listed above, 26% say it is classified under urgent and important only while only 7% are of the view that it is both classified under top secret only and important only. More so, none say it is classified under urgent only.

9.7 How does information flow?

Table 7: Flow of information

Information flow	No of Respondents	%
Top down	6	20
Bottom up	2	7
All of the above	22	73
Total	30	100

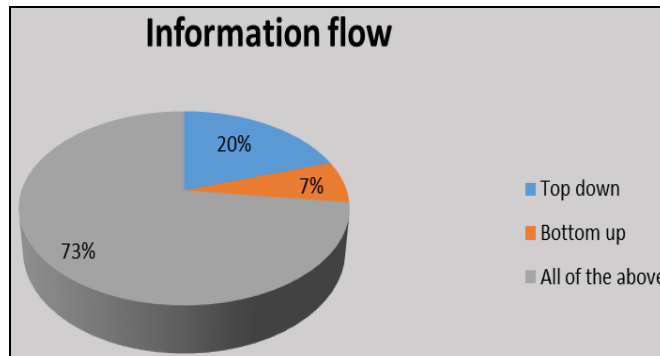


Fig 7: Demonstrating information flow.

Table 7 above shows that 73% of the respondents opined that information flows in all of the listed above and 20% Of them agree that if flows from top to down only while 7% says if flows from bottom to up only.

9.8 How can you rate the impact of information flow in administrative decisions?

Table 8: Impact of information flow

Impact of information flow	No of Respondents	%
Satisfactory	24	80
Not satisfactory	0	0
Average	6	20
Total	30	100

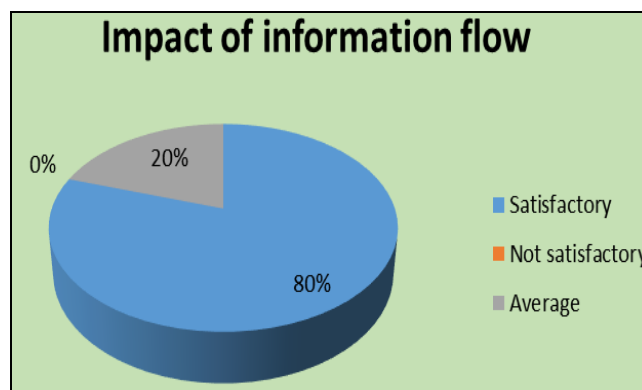


Fig 8: Demonstrating impact of information flow.

Table 8 above revealed that 80% of the total respondents are satisfied with the impact of information flow while 20% says it is within average and none say it is not satisfactory.

9.9 Are you satisfy with the level of secrecy and confidence administrators attach to information management?

Table 9: Satisfaction with level of secrecy

Secrecy level satisfaction	No of Respondents	%
Satisfied	18	60
Not satisfied	12	40
Total	30	100

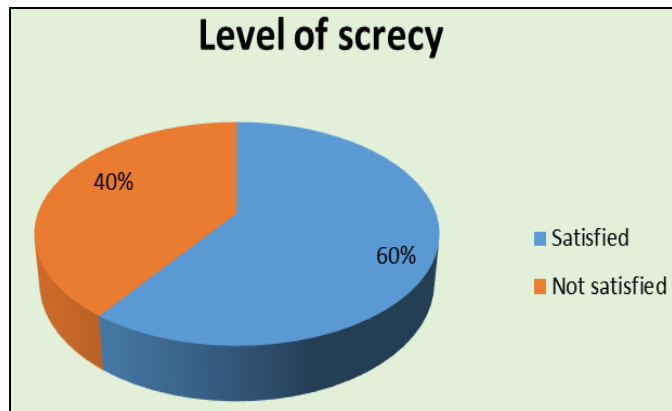


Fig 9: Demonstrating level of secrecy.

In table 9 above, 60% of the respondents are satisfied with the level of secrecy while 40% says they are not satisfied at all.

10. Summary of Major Findings

After systematic data collection and analysis, the following are the major findings of the study:

1. Majority of the respondents are of the view that information is generated for both personal and operational use in the secretariat
2. Almost of the respondents agreed that adequate information helps administrators carry out their duties effectively.
3. The study reveals that majority of the respondents are of the opinion that all the information sources listed are used to generate information.
4. Majority of the respondents say information is organized in the entire format listed i.e. Subject, Alphabetical, Numerical and Geographical format.
5. Most of the respondents agreed that information is retrieved very easy.
6. The study shows that majority of the respondents says information is classified in both ways listed.
7. Most of the respondents agreed that information flows from top to down and bottom to up.
8. A greater part of the respondents are of the view that they are very much satisfied with the impact of information flow.
9. Finally, majority of the respondents says they are satisfied with the level of secrecy administrators attach to information management.

11. Suggestions

The study, after proper investigations and analysis of the views of the respondents, offers the following suggestions:

1. For effective improvement of information management in the local government secretariat, there should be a provision of ICT Facilities to link all the Local

Government Areas for easy flow of information, preservation, retrieval, dissemination and archiving.

2. Effort should be made to encourage the use of traditional rulers in generating information as they closer to the people and NGOs should also be carried along as they interact frequently with people.
3. Administrators should also be encouraged by form of training to understand more the importance of secrecy attached to information management in the secretariat.

12. Conclusion

Local Government Secretariat is often one of the first places members of the community go when they are in need of assistance from the government; therefore, local government secretariat should be a welcoming place for all especially when they are in need of vital information. For this reason, strong effort should be made by the administrators to improve information management so that staff won't be subjected to unnecessary hardship when conducting verification exercise and the community should be encouraged to use the secretariat when emergency needs arises.

13. Acknowledgement

I want to thank Hon. Aminu Yusuf, Samaru and all Staff members of Sabon Gari Local Government Secretariat of Kaduna State for sharing valuable information regarding this research work.

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