

PROMOTING NATIONAL INTEGRATION WITH THE ADOPTION OF INFORMATION  
AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN THE LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT IN  
NIGERIA

BY

ESTHER TEMITOPE O LANYI  
COLLEGE LIBRARY

AND

EMMANUEL ALAYANDE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, NIGERIA  
OYO

**Abstract**

*Nigeria as a nation has continuously experienced challenges in terms of societal and political unification, and these challenges originate from the variety of ethnic groups and social-political inclinations which significantly declines the unification of individuals, thus resulting in the lack of national integration. Over the years, the problems and challenges imposed by the lack of national integration has had detrimental effect on sustainable health, systematic growth, efficient democratic government, unity and the overall survival of Nigeria as a nation. However, with the adoption of Information Communication Technology, (ICT), the library is enabled to promote national integration with the dissemination of accurate information, and also serve as a hub of various forms of collaborations and participations, in which individuals from different ethnic groups and cultures are enabled to work and thrive together in unity. Thus, this paper provides a conceptual basis for the promotion of national integration with the adoption of ICT in the library environment in Nigeria.*

**Keywords: National integration, Information and communication technology and Library environment, Nigeria**

**Introduction**

The conventional idea of a nation is a country with a unified societal and political structure. However, Nigeria as a nation has been continuously experiencing challenges in terms of societal and political unification. According to Onyeakazi and Okoroafor (2018), these challenges originate from the multitude of ethnic groups and social-political inclinations which significantly decline the unification of individuals, thus resulting in the lack of national integration. With regards to this, Enaruna (2014) observes that the lack of unification in the society results in serious skepticism, resentments, and antagonism, in which individuals tend to become insensitive and less compassionate towards their fellow men and women in the society.

Over the years, the problems and challenges imposed by the lack of national integration has had detrimental effects on sustainable health, systematic growth, efficient democratic government, unity and the overall survival of Nigeria as a nation (Okoroafor, Nzenwa, and Ezeibe, 2016). These aforementioned challenges and problems thus, result in stagnancy, ethnic and gender inequalities,

insecurity, corruption among others. With regards to this, a number of different policies such as, the National Development Plan (NDP) of 1962, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) of 1973, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of 2003, and the New Medium Term National Development Plan (2008) were designed and employed by the government to bridge the gap of national integration and enhance unification. However, it is as if these policies have not proven effective, as the government faces daily increasing monumental crisis of sectarian violence, insecurity, ethnic conflict, political instability and threats of disintegration. Thus, it is required for the authorities to think outside the box and consider innovative means of promoting national integration in the economy.

Aiyebilehin, Onyam and Akpom (2018) assert that one of the innovative means of promoting national integration is through the dissemination of accurate information through a reliable channel to the right individuals. Reason being that, for any nation to be unified and developed, it requires to possess and provide accurate, updated and efficient information on security, health, food, education, ethnic equality, gender equality among others. Accordingly, one of the institutions that is responsible for the acquisition and dissemination of accurate information to the society is the library. Akanmidu, Bamidele and Ogunbote (2018) state that traditionally, libraries on their own have played key roles in advocating for the development of societies and its citizens.

However, with the adoption of information communication technology (ICT), libraries are enabled to become 'state-of-the-art' and provide unrestricted access to information contents that would facilitate the building of a sustainable national integration. Obot, Bamgbose and Okoro (2018) purport that the adoption of ICT has the capability of transforming the library into a hub of knowledge dissemination that would serve as a portal to national integration. Thus, it is required that the authorities acknowledge the growing potentials of ICT and facilitate its adoption in the library in order to promote sustainable national integration.

### **The Concept of National Integration**

National integration has long been a substantial focus of attention by scholars and policy makers (Blake, Oluyemi and Charles, 2016). National integration which is otherwise termed national development, national coherence, national unity, nation-building or national loyalty is regarded as the foundation and caprice of any significant development a nation could attain. National integration pivots around societal unity of persistence and togetherness regardless of individual differences in terms of ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, culture and every other idiosyncrasy that poses threats of alienation from one another. Enaruna (2014) observes that over the years, a number of definitions have been ascribed to the concept of national integration.

According to Jacob and Tenue (1964), national integration could be referred to as the building of a society of solidarity in which citizens are willing and inclined to live and work together harmoniously and share the same goals and aspirations. Weiner and Laparambola (1969) define national integration as the amalgamation of incongruent social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographic elements into a single nation state. Morrison (1993) regards national integration as the gradual reduction of cultural and regional resentments and incoherence in the process of creating a

homogeneous political society. Hogan (2006) states that national integration involves the uniting of formerly separate groups into one group with the eradication of any previous social and cultural group differences as well as the extermination of separate group identifications.

In a nutshell, national integration is the increasing promotion and materialisation of peace and harmony through the breaking down of cultural and regional divides in the quest of creating a unified society. It has been argued that a society is integrated when it has effective control over the use of the means of violence; it has a center of decision making capable of effecting the fair allocation of resources; and it has an assertive focus of political identification for a large majority of politically aware citizens. In order to attain national integration, skepticism and pointless sentiments of nationalism are required to be eliminated, thus bringing about a common spirit of citizenship and the creation of state institutions that can be realised into policy and schemes in line with the aspirations of the populace.

Onyeakazi and Okoroafor (2018) assert that national integration is a serious and purposeful endeavor, the failure of which has grave consequences, such as ethnic tensions, distrust, gross intolerance, hate, corruption and most especially insecurity. These consequences serve as alarming forces that destabilize national coherence and unity in high measures. Thus, in order for a nation to prevent these adverse effects, there must be mediums of harmonising areas and aspects of conflicting interests and integrating the various groups and portions of the society so as to produce substantial consensus.

### **National Integration and the Library Environment**

The relationship between libraries and national integration seems to be a difficult subject of discourse; however, a number of studies and literatures have established strong connection between them. There are different perspectives about library in national integration. Noruzi (2016) affirms that from the early centuries till present, libraries have had a significant role of safeguarding the development of societies and its citizens. Aside from the provision of information resources, libraries have been validated as key educational institutions that can aid national integration through the creation, storage and dissemination of essential information contents. Libraries have become long standing development partners that provide access to tangible information contents. Several countries around the world have designated libraries as universal depositories, making them a crucial environment for information about diverse fields and disciplines.

Nyhus (2015) opines that libraries are regarded as agencies that promote education, and by so doing, eradicating illiteracy among people. Nuut (2016) suggests that libraries readily provide information resources on a wide range of subjects in order to cater for the various information needs of individuals. These information resources range from politics, health, education, culture down to recreation. Therefore, libraries provide information resources for specific reference and research, co-ordinate programs for promoting standard of education and support cultural and recreational events. More so, Igbuzor (2016) affirm that libraries have come a long way in facilitating the enlightenment of youths in terms of supporting their search for knowledge, and encouraging the productive use of their leisure time for resourceful purposes.

According to Ogunsola (2017), the role of the library environment in national integration is not just to disseminate information to a restricted number of individuals, but to offer a universal approach to information dissemination. Currently, the war against segregation and ethnic rivalry should not only be fought by the government, but also the library. Thus, the library is required to be readily available to play its part in promoting national integration by adequate dissemination of information. Akanmidu, Bamidele and Ogunbote (2018) assert that national integration is the element that maintains the survival of any nation. Therefore, information is crucial, because the line between national integration and disintegration lies in the information given or information withheld.

The ability of the library environment to disseminate adequately serves as a source of improvement for national integration. Aiyebilehin, Onyam and Akpom (2018) aver that, although librarians who operate in the library environment are not lawmakers or legislators, they play prominent roles in the promotion of national integration. With the provision of useful and adequate information on education, health, security, ethnic equality and gender equality, national integration can become a reality. In the light of this, it can be deduced that there is a synergy between national integration and the library environment, in which the provision of accurate, relevant and updated information by the library would effectively contribute to the promotion of national integration.

### **Perspective of ICT Adoption in Libraries for National Integration**

The typical roles and tasks of libraries include acquisition which consists of review, selection, and purchase of information resources for the collection, cataloguing, description of resources and making them ready for use, and serving users for recommendation of books and materials, checking out materials in and out, and answering users' questions. Considerably, all of these tasks were often carried out by librarians without the involvement of users. The relationship between libraries and library users was seen as a relationship between book providers and receivers, or libraries and readers. This implies that libraries provide what they have or what they own, mostly books and other paper-based formats while users passively receive what libraries offered and based their research on these materials, regardless of the finiteness of these materials.

However, information communication technology emerged and was gradually adopted in the library, thus, the relationship between librarians and library users was transformed. Gradually, the traditional methods of disseminating information by libraries and librarians globally faded away. The adoption of ICTs in the library featured the emergence of several electronic information resources that enriched the library's collections, services and upgraded the roles of both librarians and users. The roles of librarians have been expanded to include, information editors and information professional. Similarly, users are being upgraded from readers to information browsers and clients (Gholami, Abdekhoda. and Gavvani, 2018).

With the adoption of ICT, libraries can now be referred to as social and technological-oriented infrastructures which enable connections between people and promote various collaborations and participations. Accordingly, national integration in any nation usually incorporates collaboration

affairs in terms of ethnical, political, educational and social factors. Akanmidu and Aboh (2014) posit that national integration usually requires that people should possess freedom to preserve their identity with respect to their differences in culture, language, custom, values and so on. Thus, the adoption of ICT in the library provides an atmosphere that is dynamic enough to accommodate and absorb the various intricacies involved in building a tangible national integration.

The developmental and educational roles of libraries cannot be over-emphasised in the contemporary society. Cadbury (2016) asserts that in terms of performing their educational roles, libraries can adopt the use of mobile libraries with the aid of ICT. The mobile library would ensure the delivery of library services to the doorsteps of citizen, by educating them on how issues such as politics, sociology, conflict resolution, and other subjects that are capable of promoting national integration. More so, Saliu (2017) asserts that libraries could also extend their services to rural areas in order to facilitate the implementation of adequate learning programmes to individuals such as farmers and traders. By so doing, these individuals would be equipped with the essential skills to enable them understand the role and importance of national integration and unionism in the society.

Principally, the major roles of libraries in the society is the provision of adequate information resources. The library provides a wide range of information on diverse subjects to cater for the information needs of all levels of the society. However, with the adoption of ICT, the library can improve from providing information in print-based format to digital-based format which covers a wider range of audience. Therefore, Obot, Bamgbose and Okoro (2018) maintain that libraries are required to harness the potentials of ICT in tackling issues of national integration such as;

**i. Education:** With regards to national integration, education can be regarded as a factor that plays a very crucial role in uniting people and creating a bond that is rigid enough to ensure the survival of a nation. Ajiboye and Tella (2007) affirm that education provides people with essential knowledge that is tantamount to ensuring the promotion of national integration. Thus, libraries are required to further facilitate the role of education by teaching efficient leadership skills and expertise in the use of information for relevant purposes. More so, with the aid of ICT, libraries are also enabled to provide various forms of information resources (such as, audio visuals, multi-media, microfiche, films, slides and microforms) in order to enlighten individuals on how to live in harmony and promote national integration.

**ii. Health:** Another prominent issue of national integration is health. With regards to national integration, health is defined as the collective physical and mental wellbeing of individual in a nation. In order to safeguard the health of the general public and promote national integration, the library is required to provide necessary information on health issues and various means of preventing the spread of diseases. For instance, Adeloje (2020) opines that the library can play the role of combating, HIV and AIDS, malaria, Covid 19 and other diseases. Thus, libraries can make use of their websites and social media to sensitize individuals about these diseases and methods of preventing them. The sensitization and prevention of these diseases have the capability of creating an atmosphere that would ensure the promotion of national integration in the society.

iii. **Security:** This is the most integral aspect of national integration. Security underpins several elements that cut across military, economic, society, religion and politics. Ndagana (2017) observes that no tangible or meaningful learning, education and development can take place in the midst of insecurity and civil unrest. Thus, libraries are required to partake in the maintenance of national security through dissemination of timely and accurate information. More so, librarians can also assist citizens and the society at large to acknowledge the need for information use and literacy as a means of national security. Hence, the eradication of insecurity in a nation has the potential of promoting national integration in such as nation.

iv. **Ethnic Equality:** This deals with the possession of equal opportunities among individuals from diverse ethnic groups, regardless of distinct features such as language, culture and tradition. Ethnic equality is highly significant in the promotion of national integration, because it enables individuals to have a sense of solidarity and togetherness. Okorn and Udoack (2016) affirm that libraries are capable of improving ethnic equality by providing adequate information on culture, tradition and lifestyle of different ethnicities to individuals via social media and online platforms. Thus, individuals from different ethnic groups are enabled to know more about other groups, and understand them even better. By doing so, people are enabled to relate and live in harmony, thus promoting national integration in the society.

v. **Gender Equality:** In the contemporary society, gender equality has grown to become a germane issue. Gender equality refers to the equal consideration of behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men. Gender equality simply means that women and men should be treated equally. Over a span of time, a number of violence and abuse has been inflicted on the female gender, thus inducing the need for gender equality. Agbajor and Asamoah-Hassan (2018) suggest that libraries in the contemporary society are required to support gender equality by providing enough information on women's right with the aid of social media publications. Furthermore, libraries are capable of sanitizing the populace in the rural areas on the value of education for 'the girl child'. With regards to this, the library would have made an effort towards the promotion of gender equality and national integration, at large.

### **Strategies of Promoting National Integration with the Adoption of ICT in the Library Environment**

The promotion of national integration does not only require governmental policies in the societal purview, but also the technical mastery of ICT in a conducive environment, such as the library. Tekale and Dalve (2019) assert that the technological journey of libraries as having transition from traditional libraries to automated libraries and then to hybrid libraries enables them to be well equipped for the promotion of national integration in the 21st Century. Eze, (2013) asserts that prior to the emergence of ICTs, libraries were ill-equipped to foster national integration due to reasons pertaining to lack of proper means of information dissemination. However, with the increase in scientific knowledge, mobile devices and computers for internet connectivity and the global systems for rapid information dissemination, libraries are perceived to be ready to play a significant role in promoting national integration with the dissemination of accurate and timely information.

Thus, the consideration of making library services more available and accessible has gained a host of recognitions in both theory and practice. Below are some strategies of promoting national integration with the use of ICT in the library environment:

**Provision of Adequate Information Resources:** The prevalence of the Internet and Social Networking Sites (SNSs) has reduced the world to a global village where information can be shared and accessed across the globe instantly. Accordingly, the adoption of ICTs in the library environment has changed the nature of collections, the needs of users; the library environment and its roles. The old concept of book centered libraries has been transformed to the user-centered. It thus comes as no surprise then that in order for the libraries to continue to function effectively in terms of promoting national integration, they are required to fully adopt ICTs in their provision of information resources. Riley and Hunt (2018) opine that libraries should be able to deliver information contents in documents and multimedia formats that are accessible via ICTs, such that library users are offered access to a variety of databases and digital resources such as e-Books, e-Journals, audio books, documentaries, etc. These vast array of information resources are capable of enlightening individuals on various trends in the society, thus bringing them closer to national integration.

Furthermore, Briggs and Agbaje (2018) state that a large collection of audiobooks both free-and subscription-based are also available for download and transferable from ICTs in the library through PCs, laptops and tablets. Furthermore, libraries can make use of social media on mobile devices to upload photos and videos (which are also forms of information), thus promoting the exploitation of information resources, such that photos of 'social enlightenment activities' can be uploaded so as to acquaint library users with such activities and events. Likewise, live broadcast of conferences can be uploaded so as to keep library users in perspective and aware. Since information has been identified to be the backbone of any nation, libraries are given the larger responsibility of utilising the evolving opportunities of ICTs to disseminate tangible information to library users so as to further promote national integration.

**Creation of Collaborative Virtual Spaces:** Oyelude (2018) regards virtual space as software application, typically supported by Web-based technologies where individuals are enabled to share information, feelings and ideas through various mediums. Interactions in the virtual space can be reactive or proactive, thus it is similar to the interaction in the physical space. Virtual spaces are a perfect fit for the library, because it provides an innovative alternative way to service delivery to the immediate society. Thus, with the adoption of ICT, the library is enabled to create a virtual space where users from different ethnic groups and tribes are enabled to access and share their various ideas and knowledge. Examples of virtual spaces include, social media, online forums and chat groups. With the aid of the virtual space, national integration can be further facilitated and wholly achieved. According to Hargis and Wilson (2018), collaboration is a social structure in which two or more individuals interact with each other in a particular circumstance, often resulting in a positive effect. Scholars such as Dillenbourg, Baker, Blaye & O'Malley, 1996; Pintrich, Lin, and Smith, 2007 have revealed that when people work collaboratively in small groups, they are prone to learn even more; they retain it more and they are more pleased with the knowledge they

acquired. Conceptualising the power of collaboration to a virtual (online) space would further provide even more ground for collaboration to be much more thriving. The capacity to discuss a range of problems, share ideas, reflect and review is all done online and not restricted by physical space either synchronously or asynchronously.

**Engaging in Outreach Services:** Libraries can further promote national integration by acknowledging the crucial roles they play in the society. By acknowledging their role, libraries will have the capability of relating closely with their immediate society in terms of technological initiatives. Steeger (2018) state that librarians are required to actively adopt ICT for outreach services. The main objective of the outreach services is to promote the operations of the library as a whole and to further connect with the outside society. With regards to the promotion of national integration through information dissemination, libraries can adopt the use of websites and mobile apps in order to ensure that their services and resources are made available as widely as possible, both through using their own channel and research-focused services. With the adoption of ICT, libraries are enabled to extend their services to their immediate communities by providing individuals with adequate information resources that would go a long way to cater for their information needs. The library can also provide services such as computer programs designed to enlighten the users on how to use the systems as a criterion for educational and cultural development of their society. Additionally, libraries can make outreach to schools and enlighten students about more innovative uses of ICT for individual and community developments. Thus, providing a means of encouraging students to adopt ICT for societal harmonising purposes, and further increasing the chances of promoting national integration from the juvenile standpoint.

**Lifelong ICT Adoption:** In the quest of promoting national integration in the contemporary society, libraries are required to constantly align with the technological sphere in terms of new ideas and innovations. The library is required to become state-of-the-art in the constantly evolving world of ICTs. The lifelong adoption of ICTs would enable the library to expand its scope and gain more ground in terms of facilitating national integration. For example, with the evolving features of social media such as live streaming and live feeds, libraries are enabled to carry users along with the various events in real time. Shonhe and Jain (2018) posit that the continuous adoption of ICT enables libraries to demonstrate their effectiveness both in the digital and society spheres. Furthermore, the lifelong adoption of ICT creates an avenue for libraries and librarians to redefine their roles in the society. As regards this, the role of libraries will shift from acquiring print-based documents to acquiring rich spatial technological infrastructures. The library would, thus become much more used to providing a diversity of services and resources for the society at large. Therefore, by aligning themselves to the technological trends in the society, libraries will become more socially aware, and further facilitate their roles as promoters of national integration in the contemporary world.

### **Challenges of ICT Adoption in the Library Environment**

There are several challenges regarding the adoption of ICT, particularly in a developing country such as Nigeria where high opportunity costs are involved in establishing efficient ICT features in

the library environment. Based on this, a number of challenges have been acknowledged in process of adopting ICT for promoting national integration. These challenges are briefly discussed below:

**i. Poor Infrastructural Facilities:** This is a major challenge that libraries in Nigeria are facing in the quest of adopting ICT towards the attainment of national integration. Adeyanju and Oloruntoyin (2015) observe that Nigeria as a developing country is constantly faced with the issue of poor electricity and infrastructural facilities. Likewise, Adeniran and Sidiq (2020) observe that there is an overwhelming issue of telecommunication services and subscription rate to mobile data services is relatively costly. Thus, in order to promote national integration with the adoption of ICT in the library environment, the issue of poor infrastructural facilities should be adequately tackled.

**ii. Lack of Adequate Well trained Librarians:** For libraries to achieve their goals in terms of promoting national integration with the adoption of ICT, skilled and well trained librarians are required. Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2016) state that most of the libraries in Nigeria are occupied with librarians who are already accustomed to the traditional mode of operation in the library, thus they are rather unskilled in the adoption and use of ICT for professional purposes, such as information retrieval, sharing and storing. The field of librarianship is ever expanding and changing, from exploding internet and media technologies hence, it is very important for librarians to upgrade their knowledge in order to be relevant in their chosen career.

**iii. Lack of Adequate ICT Policies:** Akanmidu, Bamidele and Ogunbote (2018) claim that, although the use of ICT in Nigeria dates back to the late 90s, there have not been any concrete policies that support the adoption of ICT in the library environment. Therefore, it is important that, both the government and library administrators formulate policies that would mandate the adoption of ICT for various purposes, including the promotion of national integration.

**iv. Insufficient Fund:** This is another challenge faced by libraries in terms of adopting ICT. Tise (2015) affirms that in order for libraries to adopt ICTs, there are major standards that are required to be met, and these include the purchase of sophisticated gadgets (desktops, hard drives, routers, modems etc.) and the cost of maintenance of these gadgets. However, most of the libraries in Nigeria do not possess enough funds to meet up with these standards, thereby hindering the adopting ICT for the purpose of promoting national integration.

**v. Technology Obsolescence:** Aderogba and Ogunsete (2018) carry out a study on the types of technological infrastructures adopted in selected librarians in Nigeria. From this study it was revealed that most of the technological infrastructure are old and no longer in use in developed countries. These include, VCRs, old-modelled model monitors and CPUs, floppy diskettes, and many more. The use of these obsolete technological infrastructure has the ability to delay operations and harden the workload of librarians.

Furthermore, Ambali (2017) observes that another challenge faced in the process of adopting ICT is the assessment and the acknowledgement of the quality of ICT that should be in place for ensuring effective operations in the library environment. Therefore, the issue of selecting the appropriate

type of ICT should be recognised. Also, the lack of coherence in planning and leadership is presumed to exponentially affect the adoption of ICT. It is also required to compare the competency of younger librarians with that of older ones, as younger ones are always more inclined to adopt innovations than older counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

The library rapidly developed due to the vast number of opportunities that ICTs have brought about, and this has immensely enhanced its roles as facilitator of national integration. Based on the body of literature that served as the basis of this study, it was revealed that national integration plays a significant role in ascertaining the peaceful co-existence and development of any nation. However, in order to achieve it, accurate information on education, health, security, ethnic equality and gender equality is required to be disseminated from a reliable channel to the right users. Thus, with the adoption of ICT, the library is enabled to serve as a reliable channel of information dissemination in an efficient and timely manner. Aside from the dissemination of information, the adoption of ICT also transforms the library to a neutral ground for various forms of collaboration, in which users from various tribes and cultures are enabled to work and thrive together in harmony. Therefore, it is required that the authorities acknowledge the growing potentials of ICT and facilitate its adoption in the library in order to promote sustainable national integration.

### **Recommendations**

With regards to the challenges identified above, a number of recommendations are suggested;

1. The government should endeavor to allocate more fund to the development of stable power supply and uninterrupted internet connectivity
2. Libraries should acquire relevant and up-to-date information materials on national integrations, and create awareness for these materials for individuals in the society.
3. The government and library administrators are required to establish concrete policies on the adoption of ICT, and also fund projects that are related to the promotion of national integration.
4. Public enlightenment programme, lectures, symposia, conferences should be organised in a non-formal scheme through the rural communities of the state through Federal Ministries of Education.
5. The library administrators are also required to hire professional trainers who are capable of educating librarians on the adequate application of ICT for service delivery and promoting of national integration.

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