

Ethical and Spiritual Values of the Church Library in Nigeria: A Study of Three Selected Church Libraries

George A. Onwueme^{1*} Chukwuemeka O. Azubuike² Nwanne M Nwokeoma³

1.Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Bonny, Rivers State, Nigeria

2.Chapel of Resurrection, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

3.Covenant University, KM. 10 Idiroko Road, Canaan Land, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study was aimed at investigating the current state of church libraries in Nigeria considering the fact that not much attention has been given to the place and relevance of the church Library in promoting ethical values and spiritual growth among Christians in Nigeria. A survey was undertaken in three selected church libraries within Nigeria. Findings from the study showed that the teenage category of the library users was the largest and that there were a sizeable number of people who are not members of the churches that uses the library. The major problems identified included inadequacies in the availability of computers, internet connection and furniture and poor awareness of the church library. It is hoped that Church Administrators and Leaders will find this report useful and inspiring in considering the establishment of libraries within their churches.

Keywords: church libraries, ethical and spiritual values, library resources

Introduction

The ever increasing proliferation of churches in Nigeria alongside an escalating rate of moral decadence and flourishing corrupt practices in recent times has engaged the minds and attention of Social Commentators and Researchers. Nigeria is rated as the country with the highest number of churches in Africa. Churches and prayer houses are said to be a major industry especially in the southern part of the country. Churches exist in family houses, uncompleted buildings, warehouses, and in any available space. It seems that the more proliferation of the churches in Nigeria, the more the faith experience decline in spiritual commitment, morality and practical Christian living. (Ejizu 2008; Iheanacho 2009).

This certainly has raised expectations for the churches to re-examine their ways and look inwardly at how they can be at the forefront in the fight against corruption and pave way for a moral rebirth that will bring about a healthy society. Many Churches today offer educational services to their members and beyond (majorly through the setting up schools at various educational levels) in a bid to impact positively on their character formation while instilling appropriate ethical and spiritual values.

However, it is quite uncertain if the Churches have considered the idea of the Church library as another educational service that can be an agent of moral change. Potentially, the church library can equip the church in its many battles against immoralities, ignorance and poverty while guiding its faithful on the right path to prosperity and proper ethical conduct. The library is an efficient system for conserving, storing, protecting, circulating, and promoting resources for the church and community. Libraries have over the times been symbols of learning just as churches are symbols of religion. They serve as the depository of the written historical record of the knowledge of cultures and civilizations. They are not museums rather house artifacts that can be read and studied. The church Library is not just a physical place for keeping of church records and books but a resourceful hub for transmitting knowledge and refining hearts and minds. (Weise, 2004; North Carolina Baptists [NCB], 2013; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014).

Church libraries also have potentials for being alternative sources of information to people who cannot reach the Public libraries. The proximity of churches within neighborhoods creates possibilities for church libraries to become more relevant to those around them and increase their range of library services to all categories of churchgoers.

It is worth knowing that there is an abundance of Theological or Seminary libraries in Nigeria but these are mainly at the service of the Clergy especially those in formation and their Formators. They are academic libraries in nature. The libraries meant to serve the lay or congregational members of the churches are almost nonexistent except for a few, whose operations and potentials have largely been undocumented and are relatively unknown to the reading populace.

Statement of the problem

Not much attention has been given to the place and relevance of the church Library in promoting ethical values and spiritual growth among Christians in Nigeria. This may be due to lack of space for the creation of church libraries, church administrators referring to small book shelves in their offices as “libraries” where they retrieve and use information for sermons and personal study, and indifference by the members of the congregation on the establishment and the use of Church library or even lack awareness or ignorance on the importance of a library.

There is little or no previous research work to ascertain the state of Nigerian church libraries. It is based on these above observations among others that this study on Ethical and Spiritual value of the Church library in Nigeria would be carried out

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study will be to ascertain the present state of the church library in Nigeria while the specific objectives include the following:

- to ascertain the type of collections that make up the Church Libraries under study
- To find out areas in which the Church library promote Ethical and Spiritual Values of the users.
- to ascertain the frequency of usage of the Church Libraries under study
- To ascertain the library users' perception of the library resources and services.
- To find out the problems confronting the Church Libraries under study .

Literature review

1. Ethical and Spiritual Value: Concept

The Definition of Ethical and Spiritual Value are not easy to come by. Rather through various definitions of "Ethical", "Spiritual" and "Value" one can summarize what Ethical and Spiritual value means. The word Ethical is gotten from a Latin word "Ethics" meaning Character. According to Webster's New Encyclopedia Dictionary (2002) Ethical is of OR relating to Ethics; involving or expecting moral approval or disapproval and conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct. Longman Online Dictionary of contemporary English defined Ethical as relating to principles of what is right or wrong. World book Dictionary defines spiritual in various dimensions. (i) Of OR having something to do with the spirit or soul; an outward and visible sign (ii) Caring much for thing of the spirit or soul. Advanced learners dictionary defines spiritual as; connected with the human spirit rather than the body or physical things.

However, Value is something that interests us, something that we look for, something that pleases, something that is loved, and something that is good. Value have good connotation.

(Bertens 2000:139). From the foregoing, one can define Ethical and Spiritual values as expressing moral approval or disapproval of something that has to deal with the spirit or soul for the benefit of mankind. The church library is not an exception from what benefit mankind. It is an institution that contributes to the growth and development of mankind

2. History of Church Libraries

Historically, the church library began as an informal storehouse for the preservation of original biblical manuscripts and early Christian writings and materials. Tanner (1979) in tracing the evolution of the church library stated that the first three hundred years of Christianity which witnessed the persecution of the early Christians also was a period that the available collections of the church libraries were equally under threats of destructions because church libraries were housed in private buildings and moved along with the early Christians who tried to flee persecution. There were no buildings like churches to house the collections. Tanner further stated that "so in this early period the term "church" libraries actually refers to "house" libraries used as repositories for liturgical and ecclesiastical materials necessary for the public worship and life of the Christian community."

However, the good fortunes for the church library began when the Edict of Milan issued jointly in 313 A.D. by Emperor Constantine in the West and Licinius in the east allowed church buildings to flourish in Rome and other parts of Italy as well as Constantinople, the seat of the church in the East. Several Basilicas built at this time had their libraries built along. (Tanner,1979)

From about 600 A.D., the springing up of Monasteries in Europe which were the major transmitters of learning till the 12th century saw further growth of Church libraries. Their collections or resources were initially exclusively reserved for the use of the Clergy and the Monks. Many of these monasteries were instrumental in the evolution of the Public Library and the rules and organization guiding modern library usage and practices. Monastery libraries and scriptoria were important in preserving knowledge as well as restricting access to it. Monks were required to read religious texts, and copying of manuscripts was a major activity. As libraries grew, it became necessary to provide some form of subject access, so color labeling was employed by the Monks in distinguishing the various subjects. Usually these libraries were housed on the upper floors of the monastery where they were safe from floods and damp and were less prone to burglars. Windows provided light, but generally there was no heat. Books were valuable and were sometimes chained to the desk or shelf; no candles were allowed because of the fire danger, and lending was generally not allowed Severe penalties were accorded to anyone who took a book out of the monastery's library. (McCrank, 1989; Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Patrimony of the Church (1994);Weise, 2004; Guerrini and Frigimelica (2009); Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014)

3. Purpose and Goals of Church Libraries

Libraries are today, and have been for the last century, certainly more than storehouses; they are service organizations that embody the mission and vision of their institutions. Blackburn (2010) defined the church library

as “a storehouse of materials that reinforces a church's message or aids people who want to dig deeper.” Scheer (1973) notes that the purpose of a church library is to “help the church members grow as persons, to help them understand their own faith, to help them understand people of other cultures and religious beliefs, to help them make moral and ethical decisions, and to aid their spiritual growth.” NCB, 2013 also states that the “church library becomes a support ministry of the church. It has the ability to enhance pastoral counseling, Bible study, discipleship, missions education, worship, fellowship, family relations, personal development, evangelism, ministry, and recreation. Specifically, it meets the needs of people: leaders, teachers, ministers, parents, adults, youth, children, and preschoolers - all ages in various situations. “

Gray (2006) highlighted other functions of church libraries as to provide resource material support to parish religious education programs and other outreach ministries such as children’s and youth groups. To serve the needs of the parish community, the library must acquire materials that support the needs of parishioners as well as parish ministries. Accordingly, parish staff and ministers must be consulted on what they would like added to the parish library to support their ministries. Procedures for management of parish libraries must be prepared and documented in the form.

Gray further states that one should not ignore, then, minor libraries - parish ones or those connected to associations. These have often represented in the past a real place of education for entire rural generations for whom it was not easy to reach the major works and the major cultural sources but which, through the so-called "circulating library systems", were able to deepen their Christian thought and give themselves a pretty solid cultural background.

Today the semblance of these libraries seems to evolve towards a physiognomy of "small multimedia centers" where the book meets up with other helping instruments diffusers of culture.

Methodology

Three church libraries were used for the study. This Church Libraries include Chapel of the Resurrection, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Christ Church Port Harcourt and Catholic Church of Assumption Falomo, Lagos. The simple random technique (SRT) was adopted for the study. A total of sixty questionnaires (60) were distributed among the three selected libraries, with 20 questionnaires given to each library. 41 (68.3%) of the questionnaires were properly completed and returned.

Analysis and Discussion of Data

Table 1: Breakdown of respondents by Church library

Name of Church Library	Frequency	Percentage
Chapel of the Resurrection , UI	20	48.8%
Christ Church Port Harcourt	11	26.8%
Church of Assumption, Falomo	10	24.4%
TOTAL	41	100%

Table 1 indicates the distribution of the response rate. Chapel of the Resurrection Library had 20 respondents who returned all their questionnaire, Christ Church, Port Harcourt Library had 11 respondents that returned their questionnaire while that of Catholic Church of Assumption returned 10 questionnaires.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	48.8%
Female	20	48.8%
N/A	1	2.4%
TOTAL	41	100.0%
Age	Frequency	Percentage
10-19	15	36.6%
20-29	13	31.7%
30-39	7	17.1%
40 and above	3	7.3%
None	3	7.3%
TOTAL	41	100%
Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
SSCE	19	46.3%
Bachelor Degree	11	26.8%

Master's Degree	2	4.9%
PHD	0	0.0%
N/A	9	22.0%
TOTAL	41	100%
Membership of the Church		
	Frequency	Percentage
YES	27	65.9 %
NO	14	34.1%
TOTAL	41	100%

Table 2 reveals the demographic characteristics of the Respondents, starting with gender, male and female respondents were equal in number, while the gender of one respondent could not be ascertained. This table reveals that the respondents between the ages of 10-19 were ranked the highest number, followed by the ages of 20-29, while respondents from 40 years above recorded the least number of respondents. For highest educational qualification, the respondents with SSCE were ranked the most followed by Bachelor Degree while Master degree has the least number of respondents. Nine of the respondents did not indicate their educational qualification. For membership of the churches, twenty seven (27) indicated that they were members of the churches while fourteen (14) stated that they were not members.

Table 3: Types of Library Resources found in the Church Library

Library Resources	YES	NO	N/A	Total
Bibles	39 95.1%	1 2.4 %	1 2.4%	41 100 %
Encyclopedia	35 85.4%	5 12.2%	1 2.4%	41 100 %
Dictionaries	38 92.7%	1 2.4%	2 4.9%	41 100 %
Inspirational Books	40 97.6%	1 2.4%	-	41 100 %
Devotional Books	35 85.4%	2 4.9%	4 9.8%	41 100 %
Maps	30 73.2%	7 17.1%	4 9.8%	41 100 %
Television	3 7.3%	34 82.9	4 9.8%	41 100 %
Computer/Internet	27 65.9%	12 29.3%	2 4.9%	41 100 %
Audio CDs/ DVDs	4 12.2%	31 75.6%	5 12.2%	41 100 %
Christian Story Books	36 87.8%	4 9.8%	1 2.4%	41 100 %
Non-Christian Books	29 70.7%	9 22%	3 7.3%	41 100 %
Newspapers/ Magazines/ Church Reports	31 75.6%	6 14.6%	4 9.8%	41 100 %

From Table 3, Inspirational books are ranked the highest Library resources in the Library followed by Bibles, Dictionaries and Christian Story books. While Television is the least library resources in the Library followed by Audio CDs/DVDs.

Table 4: Showing the ways the Library resources promote the Ethical and Spiritual values of respondents

Ethical and Spiritual Values	YES	NO	N/A	TOTAL
Daily Bible Study	32 78%	1 2.4%	8 19.5%	41 100%
Peaceful co-existence in my community	30 73.2%	2 4.9%	9 22%	41 100%
Criticize Social Vices/ evil	25 61%	7 17.1%	9 22%	41 100%
Daily Prayers	32 78%	3 7.3%	6 14.6 %	41 100%
Research	30 73.2%	3 7.3%	8 19.5%	41 100%
Participation in Bible Quizzes	26 63.4%	5 12.2%	10 24.4%	41 100%
Evangelism	29 70.7%	3 7.3%	9 22 %	41 100%

Table 4 indicates that the library resources mostly promote the Ethical and Spiritual values of the respondents in the areas of Daily Bible Study and Prayers, followed by Research and Peaceful co-existence in their various communities.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by frequency of Church Library use

Frequency of Church library use	SA	A	D	SD	N/A	Total
Everyday	15 36.6%	6 14.6	1 2.4%	1 2.4%	18 43.9%	41 100%
Weekly	10 24.4%	8 19.5%	2 4.9%	2 4.9%	19 46.3&	41 100%
Monthly	10 24.4%	7 17.1%	4 9.8%	2 4.9%	19 46.3%	41 100%
Twice a Year	3 7.3%	3 7.3%	4 9.8%	4 9.8%	27 65.9%	41 100%
Yearly	2 4.9%	3 7.3%	4 9.8%	5 12.2%	27 65.9%	41 100%

Table 5 reveals that the Library is most frequently used every day, followed by weekly and monthly while few respondents agreed that they used the library twice a year, followed by yearly.

Table 6: Showing the rating of satisfaction of information from the Library resources by the respondents

Library Resources	Yes	No	N/A	Total
Encyclopedia	24 58.5%	7 17.1	8 19.5	41 100%
Dictionaries	36 87.8%	-	5 12.2%	41 100%
Bibles	37 90.2%	-	4 9.8%	41 100%
Devotional books	30 73.2%	4 9.8%	7 17.1%	41 100%
Inspirational books	29 70.7%	7 17.1%	5 12.2%	41 100%
Maps	21 51.2%	12 29.3%	8 19.5%	41 100%
Internet	20 48.8%	11 26.8%	10 24.4%	41 100%
Christian story books	31 75.6%	3 7.3%	7 17.1%	41 100%
Non-Christian books	31 75.6%	3 7.3%	7 17.1%	41 100%
Audio CDs/DVD	10 24.4%	20 48.8%	11 26.8%	41 100%
Newspaper/ Magazines/Church Reports	31 75.6%	3 7.3%	7 17.1%	41 100%

From Table 6, the Bible is rated the highest information resource that satisfy the respondents while Audio

CDs/DVD are ranked the least information resources that satisfy the respondents followed by the Internet and Maps.

Table 7: Showing the rating of satisfaction of Library services by the respondents

Library Services	Yes	No	N/A	Total
Reference Services	24 58.5%	9 22%	8 19.5%	41 100%
Internet Services	18 43.9%	13 31.7%	10 24.4%	41 100%
Follow up Services	15 36.6%	17 41.5%	9 22%	41 100%
Current Awareness Services	20 48.8%	13 31.7%	8 19.5%	41 100%
Library User Education	24 58.5%	5 12.2%	12 29.3%	41 100%

Table 7 Indicates reference services and Library User education are mostly rendered to the Library users, followed by Current Awareness Services while follow up services is ranked the least service render to the Library Users followed by Internet services.

Table 8: Showing the rating by the respondents, on problems of the church library

Problems	SA	A	D	SD	N/A	Total
Power outage	3 7.3%	7 17.1%	8 19.5%	14 34.1%	9 22%	41 100%
Inadequate or Lack of Internet Facilities	7 17.1%	12 29.3%	4 9.8%	9 22%	9 22%	41 100%
Inadequate Computers	9 22%	12 29.3%	2 4.9%	9 22%	9 22%	41 100%
Inadequate Library Books	5 12.2%	7 17.1%	6 16.6%	12 29.3%	11 26.8%	41 100%
Inadequate Furniture	6 14.6%	11 26.8%	4 9.8%	13 31.7%	7 17.1%	41 100%
Poor awareness of the Church Library	6 14.6%	11 26.8%	4 9.8%	12 29.3%	8 19.5%	41 100%
Outdated Books	3 7.3%	4 9.8%	5 12.2%	15 36.6%	14 34.1%	41 100%

From Table 8, it could be inferred that Inadequate Computers was rated the highest problem encountered by the respondents. This is followed by the problems of inadequate or Lack of Internet Facilities inadequate furniture and poor awareness of the church library. The problems of outdated books and power outage were ranked the least.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Church Library has been identified as an important ministry of the church that can positively impact on the ethical and spiritual values of its members. The study reveals that young people especially the teenagers are the most populated category of the users of the church library and most of them are secondary school leavers, probably seeking admission to higher institutions. The church library should leverage on this category of age group and be involved in building supportable capabilities in this category of students by providing library resources that would help engage these young and restless minds constructively as they attempt to make critical decisions about their careers and future. The church library should help them spend their time well by providing resources such as inspirational books, biographies and autobiographies etc which can help the young readers to have their heroes and heroines in forging their path to a successful life.

The study also revealed that there are quite a sizeable number of people who are not members of the churches that make use of the libraries. This reinforces the fact that church libraries because of their proximity and serenity within neighborhoods, can become alternative sources of public libraries. While many people may find it difficult to reach the government run public libraries, church libraries can open their doors to information seekers within their locations and grant access to their library resources. This development also places more expectations on the church libraries to make their collections rich and wide in scope and content while making their environment as friendly as possible especially in the treatment of the non members of the Church. This in a way, would enable churches revitalize the all important roles of public libraries, as an infrastructure of a civilized society, where both the rich and poor take advantage of a resource centre for the actualization of their educational goals

While it is commendable that the church libraries have done well in providing Bibles, inspirational books, reference books etc, it is important for them to acquire audio visual resources especially for the benefit of the

younger members of the library. Audio visual resources have proven to be very useful for stimulating and sustaining interest in the younger users' quest for knowledge. It is important to stress here that with the many innovations in ICTs today, there is need for the church library to take advantage of the numerous possibilities that ICTs provide in impacting on their clientele. The provision of computers and improved internet access or penetration can make a lot of difference especially in providing information that is current and not readily available in print format.

In the area of qualified personnel to manage the church libraries, it was observed that apart from the Chapel of the Resurrection Library, the other libraries do not have qualified Librarians to manage them. In the case of Christ Church, Port Harcourt, the person managing the library was sent on a one year internship with one of the University Libraries around, in order to grab some basic training in librarianship. Though this is commendable, it will be better if qualified Librarians are employed to manage the church libraries in order to maximize the best out of the library resources.

Finally, Church administrators and leaders should consider the setting up and management of the church library as an essential service of the church. There is no doubt that an investment staked in the church library could help in the drive to return people to books and help them in their pursuit of ethical and spiritual values. Wealthy Church members and groups should be encouraged to channel some of their kind donations to the sustenance of the church library. The gains of having a well functioning church library cannot be quantified in monetary terms. The gains will surely help in providing healthy minds to function well in the society. There are many restless souls roaming the churches today. The provision of a well stocked and fully equipped church library, which is inviting in its environment and responsive in its services, will certainly become another home to these souls in the midst of the moral upheavals that confront the Nigerian society today.

References

- Berterns(2002) in YR Adinda's (2014) Moral, Value and Moral Value. repository.usu.ac.id/bitstresm/123456789/41937/4/chapter%2011.pdf(retrieved on 3/7/16)
- Blackburn, L R (2010) Why the Church Library Is Still Relevant <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2010/augustonlineonly/churchlibraryrelevant.html?paging=off>. Accessed 08-08-2015
- Ejizu, C. I. (2008). Between Religion and Morality: Their Interconnection and Significance in Public Life (An Inaugural Lecture). Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press
- Gray, D. (2006). The Roman Catholic Diocesan Information Management Enterprise: A Model for Diocesan Archives-Records Management/Library Programs. *Catholic Library World*, 77(1), pp33-37.
- Guerrini, M and G. Frigimelica (2009) Libraries in Italy: a brief overview IFLA Journal, June 2009; vol. 35, 2: pp. 94-116.
- Iheanacho, Ngozi N (2009) A Critical Look at Contemporary Nigerian Christianity International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition. Volume 1, 2009 ISSN: 2141-8179. pp 104 - 118
- Library (2014). Encyclopædia Britannica. *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica.
- McCrank, L. J. (1989). Libraries. In J. R. Strayer (Ed.), *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Norris, T (2015) The church library: a discipleship ministry. Digital Ministry School <http://digitalministryschool.com/author/tiffanydavisnorris/>
- Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, International Students Edition (2010) P. 1435
- Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church (1994) Circular Letter: The Ecclesiastical libraries in the mission of the Church. Vatican City, 1994. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_commissions/pcchc/documents/rc_com_pcchc_19940319_biblioteche-ecclesiastiche_en.html
- Scheer, Gladys E (1973) The church library;: Tips and tools. Bethany Press
- Tanner, T. M. (1979) A History of Early Christian Libraries from Jesus to Jerome. The Journal of Library History, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall, 1979), pp. 407-435. Published by: University of Texas Press: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25541013> Accessed: 03-11-2015
- Websters's New Encyclopedic Dictionary (2002) pp625
- Weise, F. (2004). Being there: the library as place. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 92(1), 6–13. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC314099/pdf/i0025-7338-092-01-0006.p> World book Dictionary (2009) pp2017