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This study examined factors influencing the choice of librarianship as a career among students in Tanzania. A quantitative research approach, the descriptive survey study design, was adopted for this study. Data was collected using online questionnaires. Microsoft Office Excel 2010 was used in analyzing quantitative data. The findings of this study showed that the majority of the students were not aware of the librarianship career path until they joined the library and information science program. The findings of the study further revealed job opportunities, personal interest, and desire for helping people among the factors influencing students to join librarianship. Moreover, the study findings showed that negative perceptions towards librarianship, nature of its work, and lack of appreciation from the employers and clients were the factors that discouraged many of the students from joining librarianship. In general, the study concluded that the majority of the students chose librarianship as the last option after being denied from other professions. Accordingly, the study recommends more means of making students aware of librarianship as a career path; for example, mentors and teachers are trusted by students and can help promote awareness about librarianship careers. Additionally, employers and clients are advised to better appreciate the efforts devoted by librarians as a whole.

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Factors Influencing the Choice of Librarianship as a Career Among Students in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study examined factors influencing the choice of librarianship as a career among students in Tanzania. A quantitative research approach, the descriptive survey study design, was adopted for this study. Data was collected using online questionnaires. Microsoft Office Excel 2010 was used in analyzing quantitative data. The findings of this study showed that the majority of the students were not aware of the librarianship career path until they joined the library and information science program. The findings of the study further revealed job opportunities, personal interest, and desire for helping people among the factors influencing students to join librarianship. Moreover, the study findings showed that negative perceptions towards librarianship, nature of its work, and lack of appreciation from the employers and clients were the factors that discouraged many of the students from joining librarianship. In general, the study concluded that the majority of the students chose librarianship as the last option after being denied from other professions. Accordingly, the study recommends more means of making students aware of librarianship as a career path; for example, mentors and teachers are trusted by students and can help promote awareness about librarianship careers. Additionally, employers and clients are advised to better appreciate the efforts devoted by librarians as a whole.

Keywords: Librarianship, Library and Information Science, Profession, Library, Librarian, Career

INTRODUCTION

Librarianship is one of the oldest professions that emerged in the nineteenth century (19th C) following the industrial revolution. This career came as a result of the increased intricacies in the division of labor and the increase in quantity and complexity of practical, technical, and theoretical knowledge and information that are put to work in distinctive work-related routines (Zhang, 2007). Due to its nature, librarianship appears to be a profession that is service-oriented as it is based in serving the society by providing timely, accurate, and relevant information that aims at contributing to societal development. Indeed, librarianship is also considered as an intellectual profession as it is there to serve other professions by providing them skills and

knowledge for retrieving different materials from the library collection (Chiu et al., 2017). This is due to the fact that, librarian look for information, process it, package it, preserve it, and finally disseminate to the intended users regardless of its format (Choy, 2008; Damilola, Ajayi & Adetayo, 2018). Basically, the nature of the work of librarians is to serve people by solving their needs by making sure that they access exact and relevant information on time, organizing and make knowledge accessible to all.

Career can be considered as a “job, or profession for which one undergoes regulated education and training over a period of time, and which one intends to follow for the whole of one’s life. It is thus a chosen pursuit, life work and success in one’s profession” (Popoola, 2004, p.58). Salami (1999; as cited in Issa & Nwalo, 2018) observed in the developing countries, including Tanzania, many adolescents drifted into careers that seem to be unsuitable due to various reasons such as ignorance, peer pressure, recommendations from their friends and parents, and more importantly, the status associated with certain jobs without proper occupational help and counseling. As a result, the majority become partly or even completely unsuited for their careers, since they find themselves in careers where they could not fulfill their needs. Therefore, becoming unable to bring positive contributions to the society and finally become a liability instead of an asset to the nation (Issa & Nwalo, 2018). Librarianship has all the elements similar to other professions and careers. Despite being one of the oldest professions in the world, it is also one of the youngest professions in the developing countries like Tanzania. Moreover, librarianship is a career devoted to serving public interests through provision of the right information to the right people at the right time (Marshall et al., 2009).

The choice of any career or profession, including librarianship, is influenced by several factors (Chiu et al., 2017). Adanu & Amekuedee (2010) and Bello (1996) categorized these factors into three. External factors (such as directly or indirectly by one or more of the following: parents, friends, mass media, employer and counseling), professional factors (such as stability, secure future, social status and prestige of the profession, satisfactory earnings and acquisition of knowledge) and intrinsic factors (such as the use of one’s special ability, skill, creativity and the opportunity to work with people). Kerka (1998; as cited in Abban, 2019) mentioned personality, interest, self-respect, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role models, social support, and available resources as some of the factors that influenced people to join librarianship. Other factors include personal interest based on the intention of need to develop, and love for library work (Taylor et al., 2010; Chiu et al., 2017).

Experience shows that most of the students, specifically in the African context, have limited knowledge about librarianship as a possible careers option. In fact, most of the students join librarianship not because they are interested in pursuing a career in it, but instead they see a delightful opportunity for the development of their education (Adanu & Amekuedee, 2010). Furthermore, some students join librarianship after they have been rejected from other professions (Adanu & Amekuedee, 2010). As such, it appears that most of them use the profession as a stepping stone towards reaching their ambitions. Consequently, this has resulted in the creation of many librarians with no glamour, admiration, or prestige that other professions seem to enjoy and adore (Newbutt & Sen, 2009; Adanu & Amekuedee, 2010).

Despite the wide range of career opportunities that might inspire students to opt for any profession which they think is beneficial now and in their future, the factors that influence them to join librarianship have not been extensively investigated (Lo et al., 2017) particularly in Tanzania. In other words, studies that have precisely focused on Tanzanian context are

irretrievable. As such, it is not clear whether these factors have been identified or not in the country. It is through this milieu that this study has raised an interest to find out factors that inspire students in the choice of librarianship as their career in Tanzania, using the case of Moshi Co-operative University. Specifically, the study thought to answer three research questions:

RQ1.

What was the level of awareness of students towards librarianship as a career?

RQ2.

What were the factors that motivate students to join librarianship as their career?

RQ3.

What were the factors that discourage students to join librarianship as their career?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Choosing a career is a tricky task which needs high sense of care, as it estimates one's ability, values and skills towards success in the future. This process is influenced by several internal and external factors (Laloo, 2013; Muraguri, 2011; Brown, 2002).

Lack of awareness of possible career paths, such as librarianship, in developing countries is a public concern. During the selection of the career, most of the students attain information from their parents or guardians, friends, teachers and mass media or social interaction that help to make them aware in deciding their future careers (Baloch & Shah, 2014). Moreover, it also observed that most of the students were not aware of the librarianship rather they were influenced by familial, societal and social contacts. However, for healthier career decision making, students are supposed to be familiarized with varied careers from their childhood age (Inchara, Gayathri & Priya, 2019). Furthermore, most of the Tanzanian students who completed secondary school were not aware of the career they would like to pursue as they did not receive appropriate advice and direction. In such a case, they go for a certain career following the inspiration they get from neighbors' ways of life and the economic and social status of others (Woasey, 2015; Puja, 2001; Mvungi, 2009).

Interest in helping people and interest in reading books have been among the factors motivating students to join librarianship. Students feel that working in the library will give them an opportunity and enough time in reading books of their interest (Moniarou-Papaconstantinou et al., 2010; Lo et al., 2015; Farley-Larmour, 2000). Decisions made by students to join librarianship were influenced by either internal values or innumerable external forces such as a stable working environment, job security, opportunity for intellectual development, room for career advancement and career change (Lo et al., 2015). Ard et al. (2006), Hallam & Partridge (2005) and Lo et al. (2015) both found the job market as one of the factors that highly motivate students at the University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies for choosing librarianship as a career. When compared to other programs, they see librarianship as a profession with a wider job opportunity. Lo et al. (2015) found that the nature of its work has been the other factors influencing students towards joining librarianship. Due to the flexibility associated with the working schedule, attracted a lot of students specifically female since females

bear the caregiving duties therefore, they need enough and balanced time. However, even men are attracted since they get ample time to do their private issues.

Rawayau (2019) and Issa & Nwalo (2008) in their studies found that negative perception from the users and employers towards librarianship as a profession has been one of the factors that discourage most of the students from joining librarianship. They observed that, librarians have nothing more to do other than arranging books on the shelves. Also, a notation that librarianship is a female-concentrated profession has been one of the major factors discouraging men from joining librarianship (Lupton, 2006; Alansari, 2011). Men tend to strive for high paying occupations, which therefore make librarianship a last resort (Alansari, 2011). Adanu & Amekuedee (2010) found low salaries as among the factors that discourage most of the students from not joining librarianship from the onset of their career. Those who chose the profession did so as the only alternative left. Still, others chose librarianship after failing out of other options. Furthermore, in situations where a few have decided to take up the profession, they did that with remorse.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey research design because it helped in answering all the questions this study sought to answer (Yin, 2003), but also in understanding the analysis of quantitative data collected (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). The study was conducted at Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU). In this case, MoCU was purposely selected because of its long history in issuing librarianship programs including certificate and diploma. The population for this study comprised all fresher's and on-going students who are in diploma level particularly those who are pursuing librarianship studies. The sample size for this study was 120 respondents. Probability sampling techniques, specifically simple random technique, was used to select 60 respondents from the fresher's students (Diploma I) and the other 60 respondents from the on-going students (Diploma II). Primary data were gathered directly from the respondents in the field through online questionnaires. A total of 120 online questionnaires were sent to the respondents through their email addresses. The online questionnaire was designed and disseminated to the respondents by using survey monkey. Open and closed-ended questions were designed to reflect the study objectives. Secondary data were collected from books, dissertations, research papers, journal articles (both electronic and print) and workshop papers. The validity of a study was tested through a content validity approach whereby empirical studies related to this study were checked in so as to find the relevance of the questions set up to the respondents. For ethical purposes, all clearances were obtained from the relevant authorities before the actual fieldwork has to be done. The researcher further informed the respondents about the potentiality of the study and guaranteed confidentiality to their responses. Quantitative data was generated in the study. The analysis of statistical data was done using Microsoft Office Excel 2010. Thus, descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were computed and the results were further presented in tables and figures.

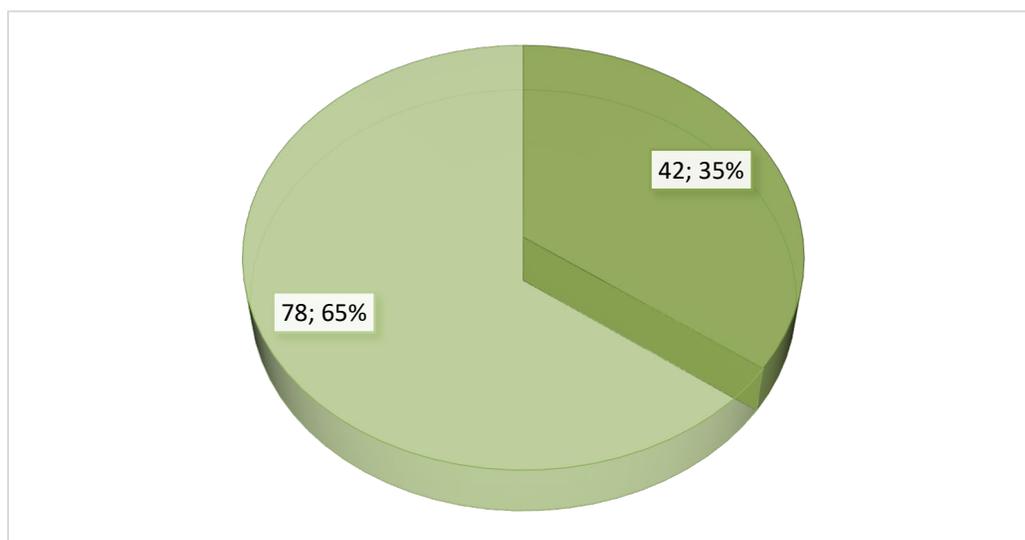
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Distribution

The study sought to find the existing relationship between gender and the selection of the Library and Information Science (LIS) program. The findings of the study indicated that out of 120 participated respondents, the majority were female (65%) followed by male (35%).

Figure 1

Gender Distribution of the LIS Students.



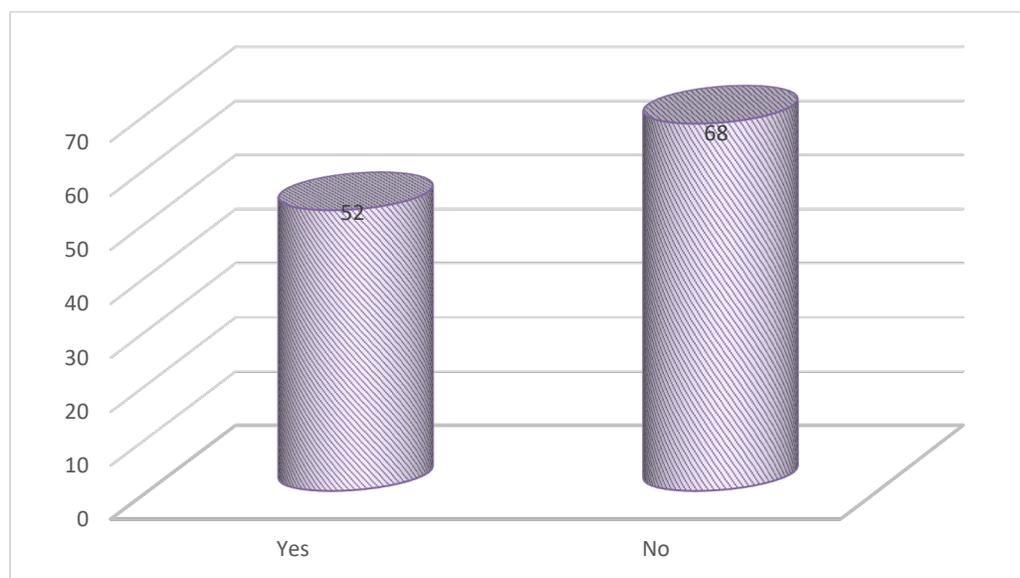
The results (Figure 1) of the findings indicated that, in general, female dominated compared to male in the choice of LIS program. The dominance of female over male could be attributed to the notion perceived by the majority that librarianship has been traditionally a female-concentrated profession. These findings relate to that of Lupton (2006) and Alansari (2011) who both found the dominance of female over men in the choice of librarianship. On the other hand, the results reveal that men join the LIS profession as a last option after being denied from other professions. The other contributory factor for the dominance of females over men could be the working schedule of the LIS profession. When comparing with other profession, librarianship is among the few profession which allow time flexibility in the working place, therefore, it attracts most of the female due to the fact that women need enough time to take care of their family so they need to balance family and work and therefore, they see librarianship as their best choice whereas men concentrated on the high paying occupations (Alansari, 2011; Betz & Luzzo, 1996; Weitzman, 1994). These findings are supported with that of Lo et al. (2015) and Busayo (2017) who both found flexibility in the working schedule led more females to be attracted with the librarianship than men and therefore, dominated in the choice of LIS program when compared to men.

Students Awareness on LIS Program

Also, the study sought to examine the level of awareness of the students to the LIS program. The findings indicate that most of the students (68) were not aware concerning librarianship while few (52) students were aware about librarianship and more important they considered it as their first choice during the application period, as Figure 2 illustrated.

Figure 2

Level of Awareness about Librarianship.



As indicated in the findings in figure 2, the majority of the students were not aware of librarianship as a career option. Most of the students disclose that they didn't consider librarianship in their application, and surprisingly they found themselves into the profession after being denied from the other professions. Basing on the findings, one could argue that librarianship possibly is among the profession which does not attract most of the students when compared to other professions. Professions such as medicine, pilot, accountancy, and law are some of the professions which are considered as a dream profession to many or profession which majority of the students wish to study from their childhoods (Issa & Nwalo, 2008). Among the few reasons that make librarianship to be one of the unpopular and unattractive professions could be due to the nature of its work, low social status, poor image of being librarian and unattractive working environment (Deeming & Chelin, 2001). These findings concur with that of Alansari (2011) and Simon & Taylor (2011) who both found most of the students confessed that, before joining LIS they were not aware of librarianship and they were surprised they have just drifted into LIS profession. However, few of them admitted that they were aware about librarianship even before they joined LIS, and that they even made it as their first choice during the application session. And they believed that, librarianship is one of the professions which is made to serve people and not to gain profit.

Sources of Selecting LIS Program

Furthermore, the study sought to identify the sources from which students came to know about librarianship as a career. In this case, the study adapted and modified sources from Busayo's (2017) study, sources adapted were mentor, parent and relation.

The findings show that mass media were the major (49; 40.8%) source for many students while mentors were the sources for the few students (9; 7.5%) as Table 1 illustrates:

Table 1

Sources of Selecting LIS Program

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
<i>Friend</i>	32	26.7	2
<i>Parent</i>	19	15.8	3
<i>Mentor</i>	9	7.5	5
<i>Mass Media</i>	49	40.8	1
<i>Social Interaction</i>	11	9.2	4
<i>Total</i>	120	100	

Source: Field Data (2021)

Results indicated that mass media dominated as the main source helping students become aware of librarianship as a possible career path. This showed the increasing efforts played by institutions offering LIS programs to inform the general public about librarianship. Additionally, friends and parents appear to be the other major sources informing the respondents about librarianship. Surprisingly, findings showed mentors were the least utilized source of information making students aware of librarianship. The nature of work of librarianship has a close relationship with the nature of work of the mentor/teacher and therefore, it was expected mentor to be one of the major sources of informing students about librarianship. The findings were contrary to that of Busayo (2017) who found mentors to be the major source informing students about librarianship followed by parents and relations. This observed difference could be attributed to advertisement costs. For example, in Tanzania, when the application window opens, most of the academic institutions use mass media as their main platforms of making the general public aware about all the issues concerning the admission of various programs including LIS. And this maybe is due to the low costs of advertisements. In Nigeria, as opposed to Tanzania, they use teachers in secondary schools as their main sources of informing students about librarianship, perhaps due to the higher advertising costs set by mass media.

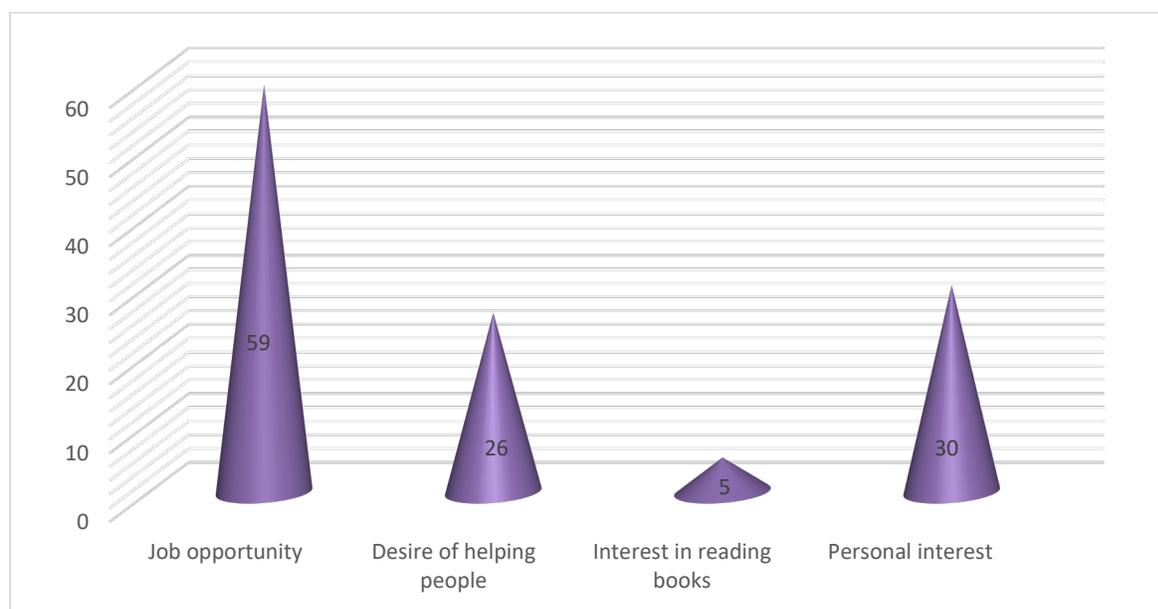
Motivating Factors in the Choice of LIS Program

The study also examined the factors that influenced students in the choice of LIS program. In this regard, the study adapted and modified motivating factors from Lo's et al. (2015) studies, motivating factors adapted were being interested in LIS, pleasure in helping people, room for intellectual development and job security, and stable working environment.

Results of the study indicate that job market/opportunity was the most influencing factor for many (59; 49%) followed by personal interest (30; 25%). Interest in reading books (5; 4%) was the least motivating factor. See Figure 3.

Figure 3

Factors Motivating Diploma Students in the Choice of LIS Program.



As the findings attest, the majority of the respondents were influenced to join a LIS program due to the job opportunities available after graduation. This can be attributed to the scarcity of librarians particularly in developing countries, which has created a lot of librarianship vacancies. These findings relate to that of Hallam & Partridge (2005), Ard et al. (2006) and Lo et al. (2015) who also found job opportunity and job security as among the major factors motivating many students to join the LIS program. Many students feel that, by studying the LIS program they may directly be employed after graduation, but also some of them feel that by being librarians alone they have a wide chance of being employed when compared to other professionals.

Additionally, personal interest also has been observed to be among the factors influencing most of the students to join the LIS program. This can be contributed by the nature of its work. Librarianship has been one of the few professions with a dynamic in a working schedule and therefore, attracts people who have multiple duties, specifically females and this is

due to the work flexibility associated with it. All over the world, many librarians are working in shifts which give them enough time to participate effectively in their employment as well as in their personal issues. This has been more favourable to females who need more time to take care of their family. These findings are supported with that of Betz & Luzzo (1996), Weitzman (1994) and Lo et al. (2015) who both found that females are more interested with the librarianship due to its working schedule, as women bare family caregiving duties and therefore, they feel librarianship as their best profession as it gives them working flexibility.

Moreover, the study findings unexpectedly found desire of helping people and interest in reading books as the least motivating factors many students to join the LIS program. Librarianship is a field with a core aim of helping people (Lo et al., 2015); therefore it was expected to be the leading motivating factor. These findings are contrary to that of Houdyshell, Robles & Yi (1999), Gordon & Nesbitt's (1999), Hallam & Partridge (2005), Moniarou-Papaconstantinou et al. (2010), Ard et al. (2006), Lo et al. (2015) and Taylor et al. (2010) who both found desire of helping people and love for books as the leading factors influencing majority of the students to join LIS program. This shows that, the majority of the students have the passion of helping people from other professions but also, they feel that working in the library will give them enough time to read books of their choice.

Factors Discouraging Students from LIS Programs

The study also investigated the factors that discourage diploma students from LIS programs. Both respondents in the study mentioned negative perceptions toward librarianship, nature of its work and lack of appreciation from the employers and clients as among the major factors that discouraged them in the choice of LIS program. Some people believe that librarianship is all about arranging books on the shelves (Issa & Nwalo, 2008), it is through this notion that most of the students are discouraged to join the LIS program.

It was observed that most of the students did not make the LIS program as their first choice during the time of the application. Instead, they considered it as the last resort after being denied from other options. However, some of them did not choose it at all but surprisingly they found they have accidentally drifted into librarianship. These findings corroborate with that of Issa & Nwalo (2008), Deeming & Chelin (2001) and Alansari (2011) who both found majority of the respondents did not make LIS program as their first choice and others did not choose at all because of the negative perceptions towards librarianship but also for those who have got employed, their employers as well as clients did not appreciate to what they are doing.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the majority of the students were not aware of the librarianship before joining the LIS program. They just found them drifted into librarianship after being denied from other options. Moreover, there was a dominance of females over men. Working schedule of librarianship appears to be the key factors that attracted majority of females into the LIS program since females need to balance between working and taking care of the family. Also, mass media are observed to be the major sources of informing the public about librarianship. Low costs of advertisement seem to be the main reason for many tertiary institutions to depend more on mass media. Furthermore, the study found job opportunity,

personal interests and desire of helping people to be the factors influencing students to join LIS program. Scarcity of librarians and nature of the library duties that allow flexible schedules attract and inspire most of the students into joining LIS. Lastly, the study findings found negative perceptions toward librarianship, nature of its work and lack of appreciation to be the major factors that discourage many from joining LIS program.

The study recommends that in order to increase awareness to the general public concerning librarianship, it is important for mentors and teachers in primary and secondary schools to spread awareness of librarianship as a career path. Since mentors are trusted by their students, it is very easy for them to convince their students to choose the LIS program when joining the tertiary level. Moreover, it is recommended that employers and clients better appreciate what librarians are doing and appreciate the efforts devoted by librarians during searching and disseminating of information in order to create a good image about librarianship and encourage more in joining the LIS program.

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