

ROLE OF HEALTHY STAFF AND STUDENT USER RELATIONSHIP IN ENHANCING SERVICE DELIVERY IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES.

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Abstract.

The study was designed to examine the role of healthy staff and student user relationship in enhancing service delivery in university libraries. The aim of the study is to find out how the relationship between library staff and student users contributing to enhanced service delivery in university libraries. The study also delved into finding out the relationship patterns, challenges associated with healthy staff user relationship, it also determined appropriate strategies for enhancement and made general recommendation and conclusion.

Keyword: University Libraries, Healthy Staff, Student User, Relationship, Enhanced Service Delivery.

Introduction

Good relationship between the staff and student users is very important for achieving the library aims and objectives, as a result leading to quality in academic development of the students. Library as a resource centre is indispensable to the success of any functional education. Education without the services of a library is a half-baked education that can only produce narrow minded individuals which will not be productive to their communities (Okonkwo 2017). According to Hernon et al (2015) libraries are service providing organizations, that function in a competitive environment which must create and perfect services that match the expectations of those they intend to serve in the university libraries.

University library is defined as a library that is established to support the teaching, learning and research activities of the university. The university library is established with a

focus in mind which is university especially by making available varied information materials to support research, teaching and learning in line with the goals and objectives of the university. According to Anita U. (2017) the university library is so vital that without the library, academic activities of the university will come to a halt. Learners, researchers and students cannot make in-depth research without the support of the library; students cannot received effective learning without the library. Edem et al. (2018) asserted that university libraries function as partners in supporting the university in teaching, learning and research, thus, making them the intellectual centre of the universities. Ifijeh (2011), noted that the role of the university library is subsumed in developing highly visible collections that are well organized and serve as academic support for teaching, learning and research.

University libraries are very importance components of universities. This is because no academic excellence will be achieved without a good library to back up its teaching, research and other community service mandates. The university libraries based on its primary objectives of contributing to learning, teaching, research and cultural development of its parent institutions to collect, process, organize, store, preserve and disseminate information resources which include reference resources, serial publication, books, research reports (projects, thesis, dissertations), Africana publications, audio-visual materials and so on. Suleman O. (2020) argued that there is no doubt that these library resources are very essential for learning, teaching and research and if the university library must retain its place as the information gate way, these are some of the resources that must be provided for enhanced service delivery in the libraries; e-books, dictionaries, full-text journals, online data bases reference resources amongst others. The university library is a principal provider of scholarly information resources to the university community. According to Blakere (2013), University libraries undertaking activities such as

acquisition of new books and developing a balanced and up-to-date collection, recruitment of library personnel, designing and developing physical infrastructure, circulation of materials, binding and photocopying of materials, etc. University libraries exist to serve the needs of the university information provision and aim to offer the highest quality service to the users. The philosophy, mission and functions of the university library strongly influence access to information resources and services critical to teaching and research. Akporhonor and Olise (2015) states that, as universities in Nigeria are changing to meet the challenges of the new millennium, librarians in university libraries who are providing library and information resources and services to students must do same.

Globally by the beginning of the 20th century, there was a paradigm shift in the collection, organization and dissemination as well as the preservation function of the university library. With the advent of ICT today, that led to digital library which changed the nature as well as function profile of library staff and information professionals bringing about new demands and expectations both from library users and library staff.

A university library healthy staff is someone who render service within the university library building. Library staff are seen as a key instrument for fostering library user relationship. The American Library Association (2021) defined university library staff as employees that are involved in all library operations at all levels. They manage libraries and contribute to specialized expertise on specific field. Furthermore, they engaged in routine activities or supervise and direct other staff. The association stressed that the range and complexity of their duties, the size and type of the library in which they work and each library specific needs, goal or mission varies among each library staff although, they have common goal of providing adequate and current information resources in addition to preserving them for academic needs of the

community. In another development, Aslop (2015) asserts that library staff play crucial and diverse roles in the existence of the university, guiding students and faculty at the reference desk, instructing library research sessions and developing library collections. Library staff also enjoys the academic status of other lecturers in a university as well as salaries and entitlements. Most of the library staff are employed in the university library for the smooth running of its operational services and meeting the goal and mission of the university. Library staff are positioned at different levels of management in the library. According to Anita, library staff are grouped into three categories namely; professional, paraprofessional and technical staff positions. The professionals are those library staff who have acquired the skills and training in librarianship and possess at least a first degree or its equivalent in library and information science and are employed on the career cadre of “librarianship” in the library system.

Para-professionals are qualified library staff holding diploma certificate in librarianship, they assist librarians in the technical and service works of the library. The technical staff comprises of library attendants who attend to all patrons or users and willfully give assistance when needed. Grouping library staff into three categories has been the staffing pattern of libraries for a very long time. Despite the fact that libraries were undergone series of transformation in recent times, in terms of innovation in library tools and technologies and in the changes of the user behavior, this pattern still the acceptable one. Library users are clients that need the services of the library staff. Thipatho (2013), a library user is the focal point to the 21st century library and information services whether it is financing of library policies or designing of library portal, patron satisfaction, has been the primary influencing factors. Library user are in different categories: students, teaching and non-teaching staff, researchers etc. Owolabi and Odeh (2021) stated that one group comprises teachers and researchers, who have a high degree of education or a master degree or a doctorate degree and need more professional resources. The

second group is the students who include the undergraduates, masters and the doctoral. These group has the good knowledge foundation and a very great desire for knowledge and their demand is comprehensive. Okonkwo (2017) posit that, for library to attained its objectives, there must be cordial relationship between library staff and student users. the activities being performed by the library staff whether directly or indirectly. Seneta (2014) opines that library institution or organizations are formulated to serve their clients i.e. users at the end.

In ideal situation, the library user totally relies on a professional for their information needs and the library professional remain committed to satisfy the client demand in order to attain enhanced service delivery. To foster service delivery to clients in the library, library staff should provide timely information services in the form of print and non print materials to its users in timely manner (Akpan, 2018). For library users to have cordial relationship with the healthy staff for enhanced services delivery, the healthy staff must be able to perform his duties efficiently.

Relationship Pattern.

Relationship pattern deal with repeating the same behavior over and over again with new people in our life, in our working place. This relationship can be both bad and good for us. According to world press (2024), relationship pattern is also called templates because they are almost like formula that we use over and over again realizing it. Our relationship dictates three basic things such as: Who we pick, How we interact with them and how we let them treat us.

Bringing the relationship pattern to the library system, it is interaction between healthy staff and users for enhanced library service delivery. In another development. Relationship pattern may affect library effectiveness, its role in academic institution, its adaptability to new functions and initiatives. There are various relationship patterns and this varies between libraries.

relationship are the main ingredients of life, it is hard to believe regarding among organization or society to stay alive without relationship. According to Haroon et al (2020), relationship pattern is seen as repeated and consistent ways in which we interact with and respond to people with whom we are in a relationship. He pointed out several types of relationship patterns that exist in deference organizations including university libraries with brief explanations, which are follows: cordial, strict and compassionate relationship pattern.

Cordial relationship pattern is the relationship that deal with pleasant such as hugging or excessive embracing. strict relationship pattern is the relationship that involved rigid enforcement or demand obedience while emotional relationship pattern is the relationship that sharing feeling, seeking to understand each other and meeting with other with trust. Companionate relationship pattern, compassionate relationship pattern is an ability to put ourselves in our partners shoe and truly comprehend their feeling, thought and experiences by allowing the users to express themselves without judgement. And Jovial relationship pattern, it is a relationship pattern that shows high spirited merriment relationship. All is to ensure service delivery in the university libraries.

Enhanced Service Delivery

Service delivery encompasses the methods and process through which organization provide services to end-users and stakeholders, ensuring they have the tools application and support needed to perform their roles efficiency. Matin and Ledimo (2015) referred to service delivery as where, when and how a service product is delivered to the customers whether fair or unfair. For university libraries to perform optimally, quality service delivery is expected by their users to achieve their information need, it is important to employ competent library staff that has very good skills in librarianship cum tolerant to accommodate their users and to enable their

users to access and use the materials in the libraries. According to Dollah (2012), service delivery involves the giving of assistance to users who is searching for one form of information or the other within a particular library, Similarly Aboyade (2013) defined library services as the sum total of every library activities which is aimed at providing the use of the libraries and its resources. Olaloku (2013) asserted that enhanced service delivery is the effort a librarian puts in place within and outside available resources to facilitate results towards every user queries and meeting their overall information needs of the users. It was identified that user education services, inter library services, cataloguing services, reprographic services, bibliographic services, circulation services, reference services and information services are some of the services delivered in university libraries. Olaloku (2013) opine that for enhanced service delivery to take place, the staff of the library such as professional librarian should be friendly related to the users. In a long memory of human race, libraries have served as sources of information and reliable place where the most desirable information can be sought but in recent times, it has continually seen a decline in patronage. This could be credited to old workflows, limited collaborations, ineffective services paradigm and lack of cordial relationship between library staff and library users and the need to improve on service in libraries has become more concerned to the library staff and users.

Challenges Associated with Staff and User Relationships Pattern

There is no doubt that university libraries are the heartbeat of the university system. That is why it has been a center for research, teaching and learning which is care to the university system. The university library provides optimal services through the provision of efficient library services by the healthy library staff to the student user for enhanced service delivery but a

number of problems have hindered the relationship between library staff and student users and this includes the following:

Inadequate communication between the staff and the users of the university library leads to poor relationship. This is reported by many empirical studies for example, Owolabi (2021) survey the attitude and services rendered by the university library staff to users for effective service delivery in Ogun state university. The finding exposed that inadequate effective communication was the major factor hindered their relationship and as a result lead to the poor service delivery.

Another challenges is the lack of work ethics among library staff. Vera and Vicki (2014) identified lack of work ethics among library staff as challenges hindered the relationship between the library staff and student users. There are also challenges of poor knowledge on library user skills among users. Okonkwo, (2017) carried out a research titled a staff and users relationship in Nnamdi Azikiwe university library, university of Nigeria Nsukka. His finding showed poor knowledge on library use skills among users and this was parts of challenges hindered the relationship between library staff and student users for enhanced service delivery. There is also inadequate library information resources as challenges that hindered the use of library which in turn hindered the relationship between library staff and student users. Okonkwo (2017) opines that the above challenges were also hindered the relationship as well as enhanced service delivery in the university library. Other challenges are library personnel do not give maximum assistance due to poor management approach. The management of people in the library in any other organization is mostly referred to personal management. The management of people in a proper way lead to cordial relationship between library staff and users but many library management or staff failed to manage their users as (Iyenga &Lepper, 2009) assert that

regardless of excuses, managers have to internalize service delivery, productivity and intention are all depending notably on their ability to motivate majority of the actions taken by healthy staff either directly or indirectly affects personal perception of positive and negative outcomes.

Another serious challenges are lack of competence among the library staff, this resulted to poor assistance given to the users in respect of information needed by the users. In another development, Emezie (2015) made mention of lack of connectivity to the internet as well as online resources by the librarians lead to low knowledge about effective dissemination of needed information to the users. Emezie also noted that some librarians in Nigeria are not competent to face the challenging role of the present information service delivery. Reason being that they are disinclined to technology and perceived the application of computer to library work as an aberration. This has been the case they are reluctant to embrace new technology. Hayati and Towkar (2008) agreed with this by observing that the most problematic factor which show down the adoption of information technologies stem from unfamiliarity of academic libraries with computer and searching data base. Lack of competent to be familiar with this new tread by the professional librarian lead to unfriendly relationship between the library staff and the student users because one cannot give what he or she does not have.

Library staff need to be literate about the new technology to enable them responsibly use appropriate technology to communicate, solve problems, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, design and create information to improve learning in all subject areas and acquire lifelong knowledge and skills in the 21st century. If the library staff have all the knowledge about the new treads and can impact such knowledge to the users, there will be friendly relationship between them. There is also lack of encouragement of users to patronize the library due to unpolitic use of words to the users by the library staff. There are bad behavioral qualities of library staff that

discourage users from patronizing the libraries. Achebe (2000) outlines the following: Non provision of conducive environment, Non tactful when handling difficult queries and clients, Non tolerant to accommodate, Non cooperative and Non respectful etc. Other challenges are; Lack of library information resources awareness. There is no user education or user orientation for user of the library.

Strategies for enhancing Staff and Users Relationship Pattern for enhanced Service Delivery.

The following are the strategies for enhancing staff and user relationship pattern for enhanced service delivery.

Specialized course and training programs for library professionals. According to Ebubechukwu (2018), one of the major strategies outline as a strategy for enhancing relationship between staff and student library users were to embark on special course and training program for library profession to enhance their skills to effectively deal with their users. Popoola and Zaid (2007) maintain that effective delivery of service by the library staff or professional depending on the training program involves by the library staff. Onwubiko (2019) posits that the utmost concern to Nigeria university library professional is the needs to provide a variety of resources to users and to support institutional programs in order to bring about cordial relationship between library staff and the student library users. Still on the training of library professional, Asiru in Uwakwe (2016) posit that, university staff that cannot afford proprietary software should start with free open sources software like green stone developed by UNESCO. He also stressed for urgent needs to address the issues of adequate ICT skills by the university library staff to enable them deal with their users using ICT skills.

Another strategy is adequate user education and orientation. Okonkwo. (2017) posits that one of the strategies to enhance cordial relationship between library staff and users is adequate user education and orientation should be enhanced to ensure proper use of the library.

. Another one is developing a one stop search portal or ask a librarian interface and library blog are some ways to cater for the information needs of users. Other strategies are;

Increasing the awareness among users about the library services, involving the users in library programs providing direct support to users in their research. Addressing the student users one on one promote the user self -confidence and encourage them to freely assess and evaluate.

Other strategies are; Use of polite words by both the librarians and the users during the service delivery in the libraries, decent dressing by both librarians and users, tolerant to accommodates and respectful by both librarians and the users are strategies considered to be use to bring about relationship between library staff and library users for enhanced service delivery.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The library should engage in periodic evaluations of how well the integration of cordial, strict, and compassionate relationship patterns is contributing to service delivery. These evaluations should look at user satisfaction, library usage patterns, and staff performance to ensure that service delivery strategies are effective and responsive to changing needs.
2. Libraries should prioritize training staff in effective communication, focusing on both verbal and non-verbal interactions. Staff should be trained to listen actively, provide clear and concise responses, and engage in regular feedback with users. Effective communication can significantly improve user satisfaction and foster positive staff-student relationships.
3. Conduct regular performance reviews that specifically evaluate staff members' ability to foster cordial relationships with users. These reviews can be based on feedback from students, peer evaluations, and self-assessments. Libraries can then provide constructive feedback to staff, helping them understand the impact of their interpersonal skills on user engagement and overall service delivery.
4. While enforcing library policies is necessary, it is important for librarians to strike a balance between maintaining rules and creating a welcoming environment. Library staff should be trained to be firm but empathetic in enforcing policies, ensuring that rules are upheld without alienating students. For example, instead of being indifferent to students' information needs, library staff can be polite yet firm when reminding users about noise levels or food restrictions.

5. Libraries should encourage staff to engage with students in a friendly, approachable manner that goes beyond transactional interactions. By showing interest in students' academic progress, research interests, and personal challenges, staff can create a warm, supportive atmosphere. Informal interactions, such as asking students about their projects or offering personalized research tips, can deepen the bond and enhance user satisfaction.
6. Policies should be adapted to include personalized service as a core principle, such as offering tailored research support and creating programs that respond to the academic and personal needs of students. Libraries should also seek continuous feedback from users to refine services and align them with their evolving needs.
7. Library management should establish clear expectations for punctuality and develop mechanisms to track and encourage timely service delivery. This can include setting performance standards for staff and conducting periodic reviews.
8. Libraries should establish feedback mechanisms to ensure that services continue to meet students' evolving needs. Regular surveys, focus groups, and suggestion boxes provide students with a voice in shaping library services by showing that their opinions matter, libraries can build a deeper sense of trust and engagement, which contributes to a positive relationship.

Conclusion

The relationship pattern between library staff and student users plays a critical role in determining the quality of service delivery in university libraries. This study has highlighted the nature of these interactions in university libraries, revealing a mix of strict adherence to rules and varying levels of responsiveness to user needs. While rules such as prohibiting noise, eating, and

drinking are essential for maintaining order, an overly rigid and indifferent approach may hinder effective communication and limit the accessibility of library resources.

There is need for a balanced relationship pattern that combines discipline with empathy, flexibility, and a user-centered approach. Healthy staff must move beyond traditional gatekeeping roles to become facilitators of knowledge who actively support the diverse needs of student users. Training in interpersonal skills, openness to innovation, and regular feedback mechanisms can bridge gaps in healthy staff-student interactions and enhance service delivery.

University libraries must prioritize creating an environment where healthy staff and students collaborate effectively to achieve academic and research goals by fostering mutual respect, understanding, and adaptability, university libraries can not only meet but exceed user expectations, reinforcing their pivotal role in academic success and lifelong learning. In final conclusion if the above recommendations were adhered to, university libraries will meet international standard.

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