

A STUDY ON PREVALENT STAFF ATTITUDES FOR IMPROVED CLIENTS PATRONAGE OF INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This survey delves into the prevalent attitudes among Federal university library staff in North-East Nigeria, aiming to discern which attitudes are most evident in their interactions with library clients. Employing a cross-sectional survey method, a structured questionnaire was used for data collection while convenience sampling technique was used in drawing a sample of 404 (8%) respondents. One research question guided this inquiry: what types of attitudes influence patronage of information resources and services among Federal University Library staff in North-Eastern Nigeria? A hypothesis suggesting no significant difference in prevalent attitudes among staff, with a significance level set at $p \leq 0.05$ was tested. The findings revealed a predominance of negative attitudes among Federal university library staff, evidenced by a mean score of 1.28, below the decision mean of 1.50 threshold. No significant divergence in attitudes among university library staff in North-Eastern Nigeria was found. It is recommended that university library managements implement mechanisms to monitor staff attitudes, such as requiring staff to wear name tags for easy identification and reporting of both negative behaviors for corrective action and positive behaviors for recognition.

Key Terms: Academic Libraries, Information Resource, Library Patronage, Library staff Attitude, Library Services, Prevalent, University libraries,

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of academic libraries, the role of library staff in shaping the user experience cannot be overstated. The Federal University Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria serve as crucial hubs for knowledge dissemination and academic support. However, the successful utilization of these resources heavily relies on the attitudes of library staff, as they significantly influence the patrons' engagement with information resources and services. Understanding these attitudes is essential for enhancing the overall effectiveness and user satisfaction within these academic institutions.

Libraries, as repositories of knowledge, play a pivotal role in supporting the academic pursuits of students, faculty, and researchers. The success of library services not only depends on the availability of resources but is equally influenced by the interactions and attitudes of the library staff. A positive and user-centric approach from library personnel can significantly enhance the overall experience for patrons, fostering a learning and research environment that is conducive for users. Conversely, negative, or indifferent attitudes may deter users from fully exploiting the wealth of information available within these institutions. Therefore, it becomes imperative to scrutinize and comprehend the prevalent attitudes among library staff and their potential impact on client patronage.

This research aims to unravel the intricate dynamics of attitudes within Federal University Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria, bringing to the fore, the attitudes of library staff that influences library client's patronage. This study seeks to contribute valuable insights that can inform strategies for fostering a more positive and user-friendly library environment.

University Libraries are academic libraries established to support the overall academic and developmental objectives of the parent institutions. In Nigeria, there are 43 libraries established in federal universities, 48 libraries founded in state owned universities and 79 libraries founded in private universities making a total of 170 university libraries in Nigeria at the time of data collection for this survey (January, 2024) and they are part of the most attended to and most patronized in the country among other libraries. (Aina, 2004, and Oyesiku & Oduwole, 2004).

As a center for intellectual development, University Libraries are open to staff, students, researchers, and visiting academics of various specializations, gender, and race. With such a cosmopolitan community of clients who are educationally advanced, with relative proficiency in the use of Information and Communication Technology, University Libraries are challenged to do more in improving the quality of their information resources and services and the delivery with emphasis on good staff-client relationship. This relationship will help in retaining their existing clients and attract new ones in the wake of competition and technological challenges of the information age.

Statement of the Problem

Important as the university libraries are in midwifing between the information need of members of their parent institutions and the library resources, the successful utilization of these resources as earlier highlighted, relies on the attitudes of library staff, as they significantly influence the patrons' engagement with information resources and services. Understanding the library staff attitudes therefore, is essential for enhancing the overall effectiveness and user satisfaction within these academic institutions.

In the context of Federal University Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria, there exists a significant gap in understanding the prevailing attitudes among staff towards their roles, responsibilities, and the services they provide. These attitudes may range from perceptions of efficacy, commitment to service quality, to cultural and organizational factors influencing their interaction with patrons and utilization of information resources. Despite the crucial role of these libraries in facilitating research, teaching, and learning within academic institutions, little is known about how the attitudes of staff members impact client patronage of information resources and services.

Therefore, the primary problem addressed in this study is to explore the prevalent attitudes among staff of Federal University Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria and to understand their potential implications on client patronage of information resources and services. By identifying and analyzing these attitudes, the study aims to provide insights into enhancing the

effectiveness and efficiency of library services, ultimately improving user experiences, and promoting the utilization of information resources among clients in academic settings.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What type of attitude is prevalent among staff of University Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria that influences patronage of their resources and services?

Hypothesis

Ho¹ There is no significant difference in the attitude that is prevalent among University Library Staff that influences patronage of Information Resources and Services across the University Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Literature Review

Studies have been conducted on topics related to this research, though some of the studies are not in the same political region but the findings are useful in guiding this study. Among such studies is that of Fasae, Aladeniyi, Arikawe, and Ayodele (2014) which investigated the use of Polytechnic Library by Students of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo-Nigeria in which they established that, 53.47% of respondents complained that the unfriendly attitude of Staff is one of the major problems they face when using the polytechnic library, this justifies the need for this study to know how widely spread this negative attitude is across libraries in Nigeria.

In a study by Otieno, Otike and Rotich (2015) on the “Effect of Staff Attitude to Work on the Use of Information Services in Public University Libraries in Kenya”, the study used a survey research method and a questionnaire to collect data that was analyzed using descriptive research statistics to test hypothesis and to answer the research questions. The study established that “243(81%) of the respondents strongly believed that Staff can influence the use of Library Information Resources on the other hand, 57(19%) of the respondents disagreed with the sentiments of Staff having an influence on the use of the Library Information Resources and services. It therefore, implies that, 57(19%) are of the opinion that the action of the Staff has no significant effects on how they access the library services since they believe they had enough experience and knowledge of using library facilities”.

In a study by Ogwo, Ogwo, and Sunny, (2012) on Some Key Factors Influencing Attitudes to Patronage of GSM Services in Nigeria, they established that, good quality service is critical to inducing a patronage or keeping a consumer with a brand of telecommunication provider. A positive and significant relationship between service quality and customer intention to use was therefore established. These findings according to them implies that, “building intention to use (loyalty) depends to a large extent on ensuring that the firm provides and maintains simple, reliable, and trouble-free service quality, and is proactive in “service innovation’ especially with the identified nine SERVQUAL (Services Quality) “measures like-wide coverage, voice clarity, swift response to service failure, communication of service failure and protection of transaction”. Service quality delivery will in their words drive/explain

sustainable customer patronage. Hence, firms that want to increase loyalty would have to focus on service quality.

Methodology

Cross sectional survey design was adopted for this study because the study intends to sample the perceptions of the respondents on the staff attitude that is more prevalent among staff of university libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria. Hence, the survey method allows for the use of questionnaire in collecting data from a large and dispersed population and it also guarantees respondents confidentiality than any other instrument. The data was collected with the help of research assistants that were engaged from the respective libraries making it easy to administer and retrieve the instruments. The population of the study is the 5048 registered university library clients across five Federal Universities in North-Eastern Nigeria. Convenience sampling technique was used in drawing a sample of 404 (8%) respondents as shown in table 2. This technique was considered more appropriate because, it is not possible to gather all the population at the same time for a probability sampling (McCombes, 2019). The research questions were answered descriptively using frequencies, percentages and means while the hypothesis was analysed using inferential statistical technique of Kruskal Wallis nonparametric H-test to determine if there is any significant difference in the attitude of that is prevalent among university library staff in North-east Nigeria.

Results and Discussion

Data on the types of attitudes that are more prevalent among Federal university library Staff in North-Eastern Nigeria is presented in this section. Different types of positive attitudes ranging from staff availability, tolerance, dedication to duty, rendering assistance, motivation, concern for client's satisfaction, follow up on clients, staff receptiveness amongst others were presented to the clients to indicate as many as they agreed with as the attitudes that are more prevalent among their university library staff.

Table 3: Types of Attitudes prevalent among staff of University Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria

S/No	PERCEIVED REASONS	UNIVERSITIES STUDIED, RESPONDENTS, FREQUENCIES, PERCENTAGES AND MEANS																								TOTAL (AGR)	CUMM %	TOTAL (DAG)	CUMM %	TOTAL	CUM. MEAN X	RANK	INTERP.																																																																												
		MAUTY				121				ATBU				50				UNIMAID				127												FUKASHERE				29				FUGASHUA				36																																																															
		AGR	%	DAG	%	AGR	%	DAG	%	AGR	%	DAG	%	AGR	%	DAG	%	AGR	%	DAG	%	AGR	%	DAG	%									AGR	%	DAG	%	AGR	%	DAG	%	AGR	%	DAG	%																																																																
1	Receptiveness	46	38	75	62	1.38	12	24	38	76	1.24	19	15	108	85	1.15	4	14	25	86	1.14	22	61	14	39	1.61	103	28	260	72	363	1.28	1	Not Readily available																																																																											
2	Dedication to duty	38	31	83	69	1.31	11	22	39	78	1.22	49	39	78	61	1.39	12	41	17	59	1.41	14	39	22	61	1.39	124	34	239	66	363	1.34	2	Not Tolerant																																																																											
3	Readily available	69	57	52	43	1.57	19	38	31	62	1.38	62	49	65	51	1.49	14	48	15	52	1.48	14	39	22	61	1.39	178	49	185	51	363	1.49	3	Not Dedicated to duty																																																																											
4	Tolerance	48	40	73	60	1.40	17	34	33	66	1.34	65	51	62	49	1.51	13	45	16	55	1.45	10	28	26	72	1.28	153	42	210	58	363	1.42	4	Of Poor Assistant to Clients																																																																											
5	Politeness	40	33	81	67	1.33	8	16	42	84	1.16	31	24	96	76	1.24	8	28	21	72	1.28	18	50	18	50	1.50	105	29	258	71	363	1.29	5	Not Motivating																																																																											
6	Value for their clients	29	24	92	76	1.24	3	6	47	94	1.06	29	23	98	77	1.23	7	24	22	76	1.24	14	39	22	61	1.39	82	23	281	77	363	1.23	6	Nonchalant																																																																											
7	Concern for clients satisfaction	34	28	87	72	1.28	9	18	41	82	1.18	37	29	90	71	1.29	10	34	19	66	1.34	8	22	28	78	1.22	98	27	265	73	363	1.27	7	No follow up																																																																											
8	Liberal in service delivery	27	22	94	78	1.22	3	6	47	94	1.06	28	22	99	78	1.22	7	24	22	76	1.24	2	6	34	94	1.06	67	18	296	82	363	1.18	8	Poorly Receptive																																																																											
9	Motivating	39	32	82	68	1.32	12	24	38	76	1.24	43	34	84	66	1.34	9	31	20	69	1.31	14	39	22	61	1.39	117	32	246	68	363	1.32	9	No value for clients																																																																											
10	Rendering assistance	45	37	76	63	1.37	10	20	40	80	1.2	36	28	91	72	1.28	7	24	22	76	1.24	23	64	13	36	1.64	121	33	242	67	363	1.33	10	No empathy																																																																											
11	Follow up on clients	27	2	94	98	1.22	4	54	46	46	1.08	46	9	81	91	1.36	10	80	19	20	1.34	6	67	30	33	1.17	93	26	270	74	363	1.26	11	Conservative																																																																											
12	Empathy	24	20	97	80	1.20	6	12	44	88	1.12	29	23	98	77	1.23	8	28	21	72	1.28	3	8	33	92	1.08	70	19	293	81	363	1.19	12	Not polite																																																																											
13	None of the above	4	3	117	97	1.03	2	4	48	96	1.04	14	11	113	89	1.11	4	14	25	86	1.14	3	8	33	92	1.08	27	7	336	93	363	1.07	13	Insignificant																																																																											
		28				85				72				1.30				21				41				79				1.18				38				27				89				73				1.3				9				33				20				67				1.30				12				36				24				64				1.32				Cummulative				X̄				1.28				Insignificant			

Decision Mean= 1.500

Source: Ibrahim, (2023)

The data in Table 1 shows that, the type of attitude that is more prevalent among staff of university libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria is a negative attitude which include not been readily available, non-dedication to duty, non-tolerant, lack of dedication to duty, poor reception, lack of follow up on clients and other negative attitudes. The data shows that; none of all the positive attitudes that were presented to the clients recorded up to 50% agreement frequency by the respondents as such, none of the attitudes recorded a cumulative mean that is up to the decision mean of 1.500. It implies that, the University Staff in North-East Nigeria are not readily available for clients to access, they are not tolerant, they are not dedicated to duty, and they don't show empathy to their clients, they don't follow up on their clients to know if the clients are satisfied or not, they are non-receptive and conservative in their service delivery. All these attitudes listed recorded less than the decision mean of 1.500. The implication of this finding is that, the negative attitudes of Federal university library staff in North-Eastern Nigeria has the tendency for repelling the library clients and discouraging their patronage.

This finding agrees with those of Fasae, Aladeniyi, Arikawe, and Ayodele (2014) who reported that staff negative attitude discourages the clients from patronizing the library information resources and services. All these studies were carried out in faraway south-western part of Nigeria and despite that, the findings are only reiterated by this study which implies that the issue of negative attitude among library staff towards their clients is one issue that has probably not been given the desired attention especially in this century where clients have several electronic and digital alternatives information sources competing with the conventional library.

Table 2: Non-Parametric Test of Kruskal Wallis on the Difference in the attitude of staff that influences Patronage of University Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Name of Institution:	N	Mean Rank	df	X² computed	X² critical	p
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU)	50	207.05	4	5.564	9.488	0.234
Federal University, Kashere	29	188.88				
Federal University Gashua	36	187.99				
Modibbo Adama University of Technology	121	184.73				
University of Maiduguri	127	174.77				
Total	363					

P > 0.05, X² calculated < X² computed at df 4. Source: Ibrahim, (2023)

According to the outcome of the nonparametric test of Kruskal Wallis in table 4; there is no significant difference in the attitude of Staff that influences library patronage across the university libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria. This is because the calculated p value of 0.234 is greater than the alpha level of significance of 0.05. The mean value of Staff attitudes according to the institutions are Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University-ATBU, (207.05), Federal University, Kashere (188.88), Federal University Gashua (187.99), Modibbo Adama University of Technology (184.73), and University of Maiduguri, (174.77) respectively. The finding reveals that, the staff of the federal university libraries in north-Eastern Nigeria share common negative attitude.

The finding implies that the attitude of Staff that influence library patronage across the university libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria is the same and not significantly different. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the attitude of Staff that influences library patronage across the university libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria is hereby retained. The implication of this finding is that university libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria are characterized with negative attitude which influences library patronage negatively and that is part of the reasons why clients don't patronize their information resources and services frequently.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been established by this study that staff attitude is a crucial factor to be considered in ensuring increased and sustainable patronage of university libraries. The findings of this study revealed that the most prevailing attitude among university library staff is a negative attitude because, the finding shows that, the respondents find the library staff non receptive, non-tolerant, poorly supportive and they don't follow up on their client's information satisfaction. All these negative attitudes are capable of discouraging clients from patronizing the library information resources and services especially in this 21st century where the clients have other better convenient digital sources of information. In line with the findings of this study, it is recommended that Management of the Federal university libraries should set up an effective mechanism for monitoring and checking the attitude of their Staff towards their clients to ensure quality service delivery and sustainable patronage. Similarly, library training schools should re-iterate the place of good staff-client relation in keeping the library alive by maintaining existing clients and attracting new ones while training and re-training of the university library staff is very crucial in ensuring that staff are kept abreast with contemporary library clients' needs as well as understanding the dynamics of the clients and their information needs. It is also recommended that, Federal university library staff should be made to wear name tag (a label of their names) during work so that clients will be able to identify staff with positive attitude and recommend them for commendation and those with negative attitude for appropriate action. This will help in checking any cases of possible highhandedness and callousness by the staff.

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