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INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC RELATION PRACTICES ON EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN BENUE AND NASARAWA STATES, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study investigated the influence of public relations practices on effective service delivery in State University Libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey research design. Two objectives were formulated to guide the study while one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study was made of 93,986 library staff and registered library users of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University Makurdi and Nasarawa State University Keffi. A sample of 531 Library staff and registered users was determined using Taro Yamane formula. Data were collected using structured questionnaire titled "Influence of public relations practices on effective service delivery questionnaire, (IPRPESDQ). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the data analysis. The finding of the study revealed a consistently high mean scores across the public relations practice listed indicating that the state university libraries recognize the importance of public relations and are making concerted efforts to implement varied public relations practices. The study found that public relations practices significantly influence effectiveness of service delivery Based on the findings, it concluded that the effectiveness of all services in the state university libraries is in response to public relations activities such as user orientation programs, guides, strategic information dissemination and awareness campaigns which enhances the university libraries visibility and increase user patronage. It recommends among others, that University library administrators should adopt regular service evaluation and feedback to ensure continuous improvement of services in tandem with the evolving user needs.
Keywords: Public Relation, Practices, Service Delivery, State University Libraries, Benue, Nasarawa States, Nigeria

Introduction

All over the world, there is the recognition that education is the way out of series of bondages plaguing human society. Suffice it to say that, education is a tool for reconstruction of an individuals' consciousness, fostering innovation and reshaping social values. The University as a higher institution of learning plays a critical role in this process by providing an environment for not just the training of individuals to acquire knowledge and skills in various disciplines. It is also a

place of intellectual inquiry and knowledge creation, innovation and nurturing of human needs for sustainable development.

In Nigeria, universities whether public or private are seen as places of great personal development and advancement of individual's knowledge, skills and competencies in their field of interest. Central to the actualization of the university's' mission is the university library which serves as the intellectual hub of the institution. It is a common fact that, the university library role is to ensure students, staff and researchers have access to latest scientific trends in their field of specialization by providing information resources of various types or forms, processing and organizing them in order to facilitate easy access and use. Nongo, Ubagu and Adejo (2020) agrees that university libraries provide access to resources that will satisfy the informational, educational and recreational needs of the university community in respective faculties of the university. Beyond the traditional role of housing information resources like books, the modern university library is clearly a dynamic hub for knowledge creation, access to information and communication technology (ICT) tools for digital resources and the promotion of information literacy. It is also important to stress that university libraries significantly contribute to the realization of Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs particularly goal 4 which is focused on achieving quality education and goal (focused on industry, innovation and infrastructure). This view is supported by Ammenuveve Dei and Asante (2022) who noted that university libraries provide relevant materials to support students' learning, organize training on information literacy and engage their patrons periodic information literacy programs to create awareness of the SDG goal. In essence, it is possible to assert that, the strength of a university's library is often a direct reflection of its capacity to produce transformative knowledge, provide access to information resources without discrimination to address social challenges and drives national progress. To reach out to the publics, the university library needs to employ public relations.

Public relations is a global practice which involves building and maintaining a beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics by continually providing up-to-date information and receiving feedback from the publics. Public relations in libraries according to Shidi and Sambe, (2019) are those library activities that are geared towards creating positive image and reputation of the library institutions before their publics. This involves deliberate, planned and sustained efforts to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the library and its publics. Adewusi (2015) noted that, the importance of public relations cannot be overlooked in any organization, including the library. In university libraries, Public relations focuses on developing a good image, building favorable relationships with the library publics, marketing the library resources and services, as well as disseminating a clear message to the user community to correct misinformation and wrong perception of the library to enhance effective service delivery. It is possible that many students or staff may be unaware of the vast print and electronic resources available in the university library. Through public relations practices, university libraries ensure publicity of new acquisitions including e-resources and information services delivery.

Service delivery in libraries maybe described as the activity of providing access to information resources, programs and services offered by the library to meet the information, educational, cultural and recreational need of a user community. In other words, the concept of service delivery in libraries entails the act of providing library users with the necessary professional assistance required to meet their information needs (Ogbonyomi, 2024). University libraries deliver a variety of services to the users. In the light of this, Nnadozie, Nnadozie and Okeke (2016) argues that some library services have close aims and objectives with public relations practices; these are, library publications, inter-library loan services, reservation services, exhibition

display, user education, referral services, translation services, abstracting and indexing services, consultancy services, provision of seating and study facilities, reference service, current awareness service (CAS), selective dissemination of information (SDI). Apparently, it is possible to describe service delivery in libraries as activities that bridges the gap between users and the resources or services rendered by the library to serve patrons information need. Effective services delivery ensures that university libraries remain relevant, impactful and responsive to the ever-changing demands of its user community. A service is described to be effective if it accomplishes the objective and produce the required outcome. As such, the library users who directly benefit the service provides their judgment of how well the service is performed. This implies that, there is need to assess the effectiveness of service delivery from the users hence the University libraries employ various public relations practices to attract patronage.

Public relations practices can be explained in the context of this work as approaches or activities employed by librarians to attract people and influence favourable attitude and support from library parent body and its internal as well as external publics. These activities help to establish mutual understanding and beneficial relationship between the library and its stakeholders. Oziko and Usman (2019) posited that public relations practices are intended activities arranged by organizations (such as libraries) to ensure that they remain relevant and create a positive image to their patrons. In their argument, Shidi and Sambe (2019) noted that the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in libraries has changed the over reliance on the traditional library public relations activities thereby making it possible for the use of electronic public relations tools by librarians in reaching out to users to enable them know about resources and services of the library. These electronic means of carrying out public relations activities included the use of social media, creation of library website, electronic displays/exhibitions program, subscription and posting library activities, placement of adverts on radio and Television. The use of these electronic channels is a fast and effective way of reaching out to large user groups within and outside the university environment.

So far as the university library has enormous resources and services to deliver, university libraries also have to continually strive to create the consciousness and awareness of their available information resources and services so as to attract potential users. Nnadozie and Okeke (2021) observes that despite noticeable variations in the methods, strategies and tools used to reach out to the publics, the target of public relation in libraries is to maintain good social image, communicate activities of the library effectively and foster good mutual understanding and relationship between the library and its user community.

Statement of the Problem

Public relations have become an indispensable tool for organisations that seek to build and sustain their trust, project their positive image and maintain a beneficial relationship with their publics. University libraries as service oriented integral part of academic institutions are not exempted from this reality. They require strong, well planned and implemented public relations practices to showcase their value, attract sustained support from their institutions and stakeholders as well as foster continuous engagement with their publics.

However, despite the perceived benefits of public relations practices, it is observed that many university libraries struggle with low patronage from users, negative public perception, limited funding, and weak institutional support. This suggest that public relations are ineffectively managed in such libraries. While existing literature such as the study by Umelo and Nyemezu (2023) as well as Udofot and Abi (2024) provides insight into public relations practices and service

delivery in university libraries in other geopolitical regions or states, there is limited research specifically on State university libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States. This gap in knowledge makes it necessary to empirically investigate the influence of public relations practices on effective service delivery in State University libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to:

1. examine the public relations practices in State University libraries in libraries under study.
2. investigate the level of effectiveness of public relation practices have on service delivery to users in the libraries under study.

Research Questions

1. What are the public relations practices in State university libraries in libraries under study
2. How effective has public relations influenced service delivery in libraries under study

Hypothesis

Ho1. Public relations practices have no significant influence on effectiveness of service delivery in State University libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Research Methodology

The study used descriptive survey research design. The basis for this design is that, it allows the description of the variables of the study without manipulation. According to Emaikwu (2021) descriptive survey research design is only interested in describing certain variables in relations to population. The population of the study was made up of 93,986 library staff and registered library users of Rev. Fr Moses Orshio Adasu University (MOUAM) and Nasarawa State University Library Keffi (NSUK). The population was obtained from the office of the University Librarians of the institutions under study. This approach was to ensure accurate and reliable data on the library staff and registered library users' population. The sample size for this study was 531 library staff and registered users of MOUAM and NSUK. A census method was used to adopt all 131 library staff which is supported by Kelechi (2025) who noted that census method suitable with small population to obtain accurate information from every single member of the population. The study used Taro Yamane formula to arrive at a sample of 400 registered library users and proportionally distributed between the two universities with MOUAM having 24 while NSUK 376. Data were collected using well-structured questionnaire titled "Influence of public relations practices on effective service delivery questionnaire, (IPRPESDQ). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the data analysis. For research question 1, the decision making accepted a mean criterion of 2.50 and above was agreed while a mean below 2.50 was considered disagree. However, for research question 2, a mean score of 2.50 above were considered effective while mean score below 2.50 were considered not effective. Chi-square was used to test the hypothesis at 0.5 level of significance where the value greater than 0.5 were considered significant while values below 0.5 were considered insignificant. A total of 531 questionnaires were administered to both library staff and registered library users in the universities under study. Out of this number; 131 questionnaires were distributed to library staff in the two universities. Of these, 103 were duly completed and returned representing a return rate of 78.6%. Also, 400 questionnaires were administered to registered library users across the two universities. Out of these, 376 were returned representing a return rate of 94%. Summarily, 479 questionnaires were successfully retrieved in good condition

and used for analysis representing an overall return rate of 90.2%.

Results and Discussion of Findings

1. **Research Question 1:** What are the public relations practices in State university libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States?

Table 1: Public Relations Practices in State University Libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States

N=103

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Planning and implementation of library week	39	42	15	7	3.11	0.82	Agree
2	Use of library notice board and suggestion box	41	46	10	6	3.18	0.79	Agree
3	Online presence through social media use	43	42	12	6	3.18	0.81	Agree
4	Library Website and Email to communicate with users and staff	40	44	13	6	3.14	0.80	Agree
5	Library user education/ orientations	39	44	14	6	3.11	0.82	Agree
6	Reference and referral service	42	43	12	6	3.17	0.81	Agree
7	Display and Exhibition of information resources	41	43	13	6	3.14	0.80	Agree
8	Organizing book fairs, news talk, and phone-in programmes	40	42	15	6	3.11	0.82	Agree
9	Creation of film hours and periodic library publications	41	42	14	6	3.13	0.81	Agree
10	Subscription and resource sharing	42	41	14	6	3.14	0.82	Agree
11	Creation of relaxation and special information corners	41	40	15	7	3.14	0.81	Agree

Source: (Field Survey, 2025)

Table 1 showed the mean scores of response value of items 1-11 as 3.11, 3.18, 3.18, 3.14, 3.11, 3.17, 3.14, 3.11, 3.13, 3.14, and 3.14 with a clustering mean 3.14. The standard deviation values 0.82, 0.79, 0.81, 0.80, 0.82, 0.81, 0.80, 0.82, 0.81, 0.82 and 0.81 also tallied respectively. The result indicated respondents agree that various public relations practices are being implemented in state university libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States. It is an indication that the libraries under study embraced and effectively engage in public relations activities such as organizing library week, using notice board, exhibitions, social media communication, and collaborative resource sharing to promote positive relationship with their users. Similarly, user education and orientation are acknowledged as important practices which reflects the libraries commitments to ensuring that patrons are well guided in the use of library resources and services. Public relations practices such as book fairs, news talks, phone-in-programmes, and display of resources demonstrated the libraries effort in enhancing visibility and strengthen visibility. Summarily, the high mean scores recorded by all items indicated that the two states university libraries employed a range of public relations

practices and these practices contributes to promoting the library resources and services. The practices also strengthen user engagement with the libraries thereby showing it as an indispensable academic entity.

Research Questions Two: How effective has public relations practices influence services delivery in State University libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States?

Table 2: Effectiveness of Service Delivery to Users in the State University Libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States

N=376

S/N	Items	VE	E	LE	NE	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
12	User education/orientation through directional guides	120	130	66	60	2.80	1.07	Effective
13	Reference and referral services	110	140	86	40	2.72	1.11	Effective
14	Lending services	120	136	90	30	2.92	0.93	Effective
15	Strategic dissemination of information (SDI)	96	160	80	40	2.72	1.06	Effective
16	Abstracting and indexing services	80	160	96	40	2.59	1.08	Effective
17	Current Awareness Service (CAS)	200	100	50	26	3.19	1.08	Effective
18	Consultancy services	140	110	80	46	2.86	1.00	Effective
19	Literature search for research	150	120	56	50	2.96	1.06	Effective
10	Reprographic services e.g., photocopying, scanning, downloading	111	149	70	46	2.86	0.97	Effective
10	Internet and virtual library services	170	118	50	38	3.08	1.03	Effective
11	Anti-plagiarism test services	180	79	70	47	3.04	1.07	Effective

Source: (Field Survey, 2025)

The data presented in table 2 assessed the effectiveness of service delivery in the university libraries under study as influenced by public relations practices. The mean scores of response value of items 12 – 20 ranges from 2.80, 2.72, 2.92, 2.72, 2.59, 3.19, 2.86, 2.96, 2.86, 3.08 and 3.04. The table showed corresponding standard as 1.07, 1.11, 0.93, 1.06, 1.08, 1.08, 1.00, 1.06, 0.97, 1.03 and 1.07 respectively. The result revealed high mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and 0.50 respectively indicating that respondents agreed that public relations practices have a positive influence on the effectiveness of service delivery in the university libraries under study. The standard deviation values indicated that respondents were fairly consistent which suggested that their opinions were not widely dispersed and there were common perception of effectiveness among the library users. From the results, services such as current awareness service, internet and virtual library and anti-plagiarism test recording high mean scores indicated that these services are perceived as most effectively delivered. Additionally, services such as lending services, consultancy and reprographic services were also considered effective by the respondents. However, services like abstracting and indexing, though rated effective by respondents, they

recorded low mean scores indicating that these technical services seem not to be well promoted or utilized by patrons. This implies the need for more user education or publicity on the relevance of abstract and indexes to academic research and knowledge organization in libraries. Summarily, the high mean scores and corresponding standard deviation confirms that public relations practices have significantly influence the effectiveness of service delivery in the state university libraries studied. It is possible from the result to maintain that the libraries are performing well in meeting their user's information need by combining traditional and modern services supported by robust communication and user engagement practices.

Table 3: Chi-square Test on the influence of public relations practice on effective service delivery

Opinions	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Df	X^2cal	X^2tab	Level of Sig	Decision
No Influence	37 (36.7%)	50 (49.5%)	1	14.76	3.84	0.000	Significant
Influence	66 (65.3%)	50 (49.5%)					

Values in parentheses are percentages ($X^2 = 14.76$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.05 > 0.00$)

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics (percentages) and inferential statistics (chi-square test) used to determine the significant influence of public relations practice on effective service delivery in State University libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States. The results show that 65.3% of respondents agreed that public relations practices has a significant influence on the effectiveness of service delivery, while 36.7% disagreed. The calculated chi-square value (14.76) is greater than the table value (3.84) at a 0.05 level of significance with 1 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This implies that public relations practices has a significant influence on effective service delivery in State University libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study discovered that, the listed public relations practices are active in the State university libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States as results showed a consistent and consensus agreement by the respondents evidenced by the mean scores above 3.00. Each item received a response of strongly agree and agree confirming the activeness of the listed public relations practices; notably, the mean score of 3.11 to 3.18 for library week, user orientation and book fairs indicated a strong consensus of their implementation. Also, library websites, email, and social media use received the high mean scores above 3.14 which indicated that the university libraries align with digitalization as global best practices. This study discovered that State university libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States are implementing various public relations practices positively shown by the respondents.

The second finding of this study revealed that public relations practices has significant influence on the effectiveness of service delivery in the States University libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States. The study revealed an overall high effectiveness of service delivery, from user education to anti-plagiarism test, mean scores between 3.11 and 3.17 were recorded from the respondents which showed a strong performance of the State university libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States. It further indicated that library services in Benue and Nasarawa States to a large

extent are meeting user needs. This further revealed that public relations practices make information accessible to satisfy their need. The result further showed that the degree of use of the library was very high.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, this study therefore concludes that public relations practices have a significant influence on the effectiveness of service delivery in the States University libraries in Benue and Nasarawa States. The study established that the effectiveness of all services is in response to public relations activities such as user orientation programs, guides, information dissemination and awareness campaigns which enhances the university libraries visibility and increase user engagement. It is clear that a well-planned and coordinated public relation practices help in bridging the gap between library resources and utilization by users, ensuring that library resources and services are more accessible and tailored to meet the needs of students, faculty staff and researchers. Given the essential role of public relations practices in boosting service effectiveness, policies should be made to ensure regular user education, digital literacy training and ensuring that students as well as academic staff are informed of the library collections and services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

1. University management should establish and ensure funding of public relations units in libraries to manage communication, user engagement, and service promotion.
2. Given the essential role of public relations in boosting service effectiveness, policies should be made to ensure regular user education, digital literacy training and ensuring that students as well as academic staff are informed of the library collections, programmes and services offered.
3. Libraries should closely work with faculties and departments to ensure strengthening academic integrity through anti-plagiarism test into research (projects, dissertation and thesis) submission process. This will increase the value of libraries and attract the support of the university management and other stakeholders.
4. University library administrators should adopt regular service evaluation and feedback to ensure continuous improvement of services in tandem with the evolving user needs.
5. Libraries should prioritize the adoption of well-structured public relations practices to enhance service delivery. This could be achieved when institutions develop clear communication strategies that will ensure effective engagement between library staff and users.

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