

Library Policies as Factors Affecting Use of Library by Undergraduate Students of Two Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria.

by

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Abstract

This study focused on library policies as factors affecting use of library by the undergraduate students of two universities in North-central Nigeria. Libraries are established to enhance the teaching, learning and research activities of the institutions and to achieve this, effective library policies are necessary. Unfortunately, researchers' investigation disclosed that policies such as overdue are usually not observed in the studied libraries, and this, therefore, calls for investigation. The objective of the study is to ascertain the frequency of library use by undergraduates in the studied universities and investigate the effect of charging and discharging policy as well as finding out the effect of overdue policy on the use of resources. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and used proportionate stratified random sampling technique to sample 500 students from a total of 11,732 undergraduates. Five hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed and 429 returned; representing a return rate of 86%. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of percentages as well as mean and standard deviation. The decision rule for research questions one through three was based on whether the mean score value was lower than or above the criterion mean of 2.50. The findings of the study revealed that the use of library resources among students was relatively low. The study also revealed that charging and discharging policy of the library contrarily influence undergraduate's use of library, overdue fine policy of the studied libraries is not appropriate. It is concluded that library policies are important variables for effective use of library resources by the undergraduates in the universities studied. The study also recommended that library management should review some policies such as charges on overdue resources, policy on number of books to be borrowed by users at a time and the need for university libraries to migrate to automated process of discharging information to make it easier for users to access.

Keywords: Charging, Discharging, Library Policy, Library Resources, Overdue fine

Introduction

Universities are important institutions that provide conducive learning environment for individuals. They are usually seen to have played an important role in the increase of social, economic, scientific, and technological manpower development of any nation. One of the targeted aims and objectives of many universities is to impact learning, teaching, research knowledge and community services which are needed for nation building.

To support this view, Eze and Uzoigwe (2013) stressed that one of the major objectives of universities is to promote scholarship, research and learning in various fields. In order to achieve the set up goals of the universities, there is need for universities to establish well equipped libraries, with huge collections of both print and E-resources that will enhance students and faculty members' performance on learning and research.

Academic libraries are very necessary when establishing universities. They are usually an integral part of the university system, since they support their goals. They are mostly located in the heart of the universities, and their aim is to provide users with conducive learning environment and resources that will enhance their intellectual performance. Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) defined university library as the scholastic heart of the university framework and its essence is to provide students and faculty members with necessary materials and enabling environment that support instructing, learning and research exercises in the universities.

Therefore, for any university library to stand the test of time there is need for acquiring of sufficient library resources to attract students and lecturers who are mostly the primary patrons. Utilisation of library and its resources are usually important variable in determining the effectiveness of services provided by libraries. A better understanding of library use and its resources would make libraries improve in acquisition of resources and service delivery to their users. Therefore, it is necessary for university libraries to have adequate and available resources for its users.

Library policies could also encourage students to frequently use the library. That is to say that if library policies are user friendly, students' patronising of the library and utilisation of these resources will be highly enhanced. Library policies are set of guidelines and controls that guide the utilization and operations of the library. These policies are usually considered and approved by the university management. The policies normally enable the university librarians achieve the goals of the library. Okoro and Udoumoh (2007) stated that library policies are set of rules that are recommended by an authority, identifying with the activities of those under the power's control. Library policies, among others include rules and regulations governing opening and closing hours of the libraries, fines for overdue, charging and discharging of library resources. Nina-okpousung (2011) observed that academic libraries have established policies to ensure that clients act legitimately and library resources are utilized adequately. Similarly, Udoumoh and Okoro (2007) asserted that it is in the interest of libraries to make policies to guarantee library resources are utilised.

Overdue policies are also one of the important library policies, which are considered when making rules for effective use of library resources. The policies are mostly meant for materials that are not returned to the library when they are borrowed, by either students or faculty members and are due to be returned. The number of days library resources are loaned to users before they are returned and date of return differ from one library to another, depending on the loaning and borrowing policies of each library. Nina-okpousung (2011) noted that refusal to return materials when due, dismissal for library due notification conveyed is viewed as overdue of materials. These overdue materials mostly affect students, especially when the resources are few and students demand for the materials is high. This attitude negatively affects the students, which in turn affects the students' academic output. Students mostly prefer to use libraries with flexible overdue policies.

Library policy on charging/ discharging of library resources is very essential in determining the effectiveness of library use and its resources by students. They simply refer to policy formulated by the library authority in checking how resources are being borrowed out to users and returned to the library on or before the date due. Adebowale, Okiki and Yakubu (2013) stressed that charging and discharging simply refer to loaning out library resources to clientele who require them out of the walls of library and the resources being returned on or before the date due. Adomi (2003) opined that some clients were happy with library charging/ discharging approach since it forces them to return books quickly and giving others access to these materials.

For a university library to be worth calling a library there is need, for its resources to be fully utilised. Results from several research and personal observations have shown that there is a low usage of library and its resources by undergraduate students (Awojobi, 2004: Eze and Uzoigwe, 2013). This situation has become worrisome, because adequate use of library resources is very essential for completion of undergraduate studies by students. It is based on the above statement that the researchers decided to investigate library policies as factors affecting use of library and its resources.

Statement of the problem

Libraries are established to enhance the teaching, learning and research activities of the institutions. For university libraries to achieve this purpose they formulated policies needed to control the activities of the libraries. This is necessary in order to protect and preserve library resources adequately as well as to ensure good circulation of the reading resources to patrons. Thus, charging/discharging policies, overdue policies among others are expected to be effective in most libraries.

Preliminary investigations by the researchers revealed that library policies such as overdue policy are usually not generally effective in most libraries. The attitude of some students not complying with these policies affects other students' use of library resources. A favourable charging/ discharging policy would also enhance the effective use of library resources by students. Similarly, the researchers observed that most federal university libraries in North Central, Nigeria are underutilised despite the financial resources allocated to them. It is therefore, necessary to investigate and find out what could be responsible for low use of these libraries and their resources. Such knowledge is necessary in order to embark on appropriate measures to improve the students' level of library use and its resources. Thus, this study investigates library policies as factors affecting use of resources by undergraduate students in two universities in North-central, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study to:

1. ascertain the frequency of library use by the undergraduate students of the two universities in North-central, Nigeria.
2. investigate the effects of charging and discharging policy on the use of resources by undergraduate students in the universities studied.
3. find out the effects of overdue policy on the use of resources by undergraduate students in the universities studied.

Literature Review

Academic libraries are usually seen as the heartbeat of any tertiary institutions such as the university. This is why it is important that libraries provide adequate resources that will support the academic performance of the students. These resources when provided need to be safe-guided and protected from human factors. Adequate protection is achieved mainly when there is a written library policy.

A good policy on closing and opening hours of the library is important for effective utilisation of library resources by undergraduate students. However, libraries without written policy on library hours of operation usually face challenges of under-utilisation of its resources. Kannappanavar and Manjunatha (2011) revealed that, it is fundamental that libraries ought to be kept open longer than the working hours of the school. In this way Engineering College Library ought to give library benefits at any rate to 12 hours per day. Similarly, Kwadzo (2014) expressed that in spite of the fact that the opening hours of the libraries vary, every one of the libraries, in any case, opening between 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p. m. amongst Monday and Friday. She underlined that amid the semester, the Balme Library Ghana, opens from 9.00 am to 10.00 pm from Monday to Friday, and from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm on Saturdays. She also ascertained that for convenient services, conveyance and productive utilisation of library resources there is need for opening and closing hours to be extended

Another important factor to be considered for effective use of library policy is overdue policy of library resources. It is important for every library to have an existing policy on overdue materials. Late returning of library materials has a negative effect on students' use of library. Several studies on the effect of overdue of library materials to library use have shown that students keep hold of library materials for some reasons best known to them. Okuonghae, Ijeh and Erhabor (2018) which revealed that the refusal of students to return overdue book usually affect other students use of university libraries in Ondo and Ekiti state of Nigeria. Similarly, Eruwwe, Akpojotor and Okonoko (2015) reported that library resources if not returned when due may not be effortlessly found when required. Therefore, it is necessary for a good library policy to be formulated to guide library users, and library users are expected to adhere strictly to these policies. Nina-okpousung (2011) in a similar study on library policies found out that lack of sufficient library hours contribute to the late returning of library resources.

Charging and discharging policy in a library is very important when making a case for effective utilisation of library resources. It is the most recognised duty in the Circulation Section of every library, because it deals with loaning and prompt returning of library resources irrespective of either in print or electronic format. Salama and Ekoja (2018) describe charging and discharging as a system adopted by most libraries to loan out library materials to user as well as received then after the due date. Similarly, Adebowale, *et al.* (2013) stated that the term, charging is the advancing out of library resources especially books to clients who require them outside the environment of the library.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study, descriptive survey research design was adopted. A total of 11,732 undergraduate students formed the target population. The researchers purposively selected two faculties each from the two studied universities. The study used Neyman's allocation formula for proportionate stratified random sampling technique to sample 500 undergraduate students from two faculties each in the two studied universities. These formula allows researchers to choose the needed sample size they can manage (Stat-trek, 2012). Five hundred (500) copies of questionnaire were distributed and (429) were returned; representing a return rate of 86%. Face and content validity was observed by the supervisor and expert in Federal University of Technology, Minna. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of percentages as well as mean and standard deviation. The decision rule for research questions one through three was based on whether the mean score value was lower than or above the criterion mean value of 2.50 bench-mark.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
University		
Unilorin	234	55
FUTM	195	45
TOTAL	429	100
Faculties/School (Unilorin)		
Arts	103	24
Social science	131	31
(FUTM)		
Engineering	131	31
Education	64	14
TOTAL	429	100

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the copies of the questionnaire returned. The Table shows that 234 (55%) copies of the questionnaire were returned from University of Illorin, while from Federal University of Technology Minna 195 (45%) copies of the questionnaire were returned. The General response rate was 86%. Table 1 also showed that 131(31%) of the respondents who were majority came from the Faculties of social science in Unillorin and School of Engineering in FUTM respectively, 103(24%) of the respondents were from Faculty of Arts in Unillorin, while 64 (14%) of them were from School of Education in FUTM.

Table 2: Frequency of library use and its resources

S/No	Statements	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	\bar{x}	σ
1	I visit the library daily	119 (27.7%)	71 (16.6%)	89 (20.7%)	150 (35%)	2.21	1.29
2	I visit the library twice a week	91 (21.21%)	48 (11.18%)	100 (23.3%)	190 (44.3%)	2.01	1.18
3	I visit the library thrice a week	270 (63.0%)	55 (13.0%)	48 (11.0%)	56 (13.0%)	3.26	1.07
4	I visit the library once a month	51 (11.9%)	54 (12.58%)	46 (10.72)	278 (64.80%)	1.63	1.05
5	I visit the library once a semester	71 (16.60%)	50 (11.70%)	58 (13.50%)	250 (58.20%)	1.76	1.17

Key: SA (4) = strongly agree A (3) =agree D (2) = disagree SD (1) = strongly disagree, Mean= Standard deviation = σ

Table 2 revealed that out of the five items listed for students to indicate the extent they make use of the libraries, only one of the items yielded high mean score of 3.26 which was above the 2.50 mark on the 4-point Likert scale with the statement; I visit the library thrice in a week. All the other four items produced low mean values below 2.50, these items include item 1: I visit the library daily ($\bar{x}=3.25$), etc.

Table 3: Extent policy on over due Affect Students use of Library Resources

S/N	Statements	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	\bar{x}	σ
1	Short notice for overdue materials make me feel reluctant to borrow library resources	226 52.4%	141 32.6%	8 2.40%	54 12.6%	3.25	0.99
2	policy of low fine on overdue highly deprives me access to current resources as students keep library resource without prompt renewal	159 36.8%	157 36.3%	12 2.8%	101 24.1%	2.87	1.15
3	Penalty for not returning overdue materials after sending several overdue calls discourages borrowing	68 15.7%	50 11.6%	191 44.2%	120 28.5%	2.15	1.01

Key: SA (4) = strongly agree, A (3) = agree, D (2) = disagree and SD (1) = strongly disagree
Standard deviation = σ

Table 3 shows that three items were provided for students to identify the extent policy on overdue resources affects students' use of library resources. Two out of the three items produced high mean scores which were above 2.50 benchmark on the 4-point Likert scale. These items include item 1: short notice for overdue materials make them feel reluctant to borrow library resources

Table 4: Effect of policy on Charging and Discharging on students' Use of Library Resources

S/NO	Statements	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	\bar{x}	σ
1	The number of books allowed to be borrowed by library user at a time is inadequate for my study	241 55.8%	97 22.5%	21 5.4%	70 16.3%	3.18	1.01
2	The policy on return of library materials before vacation deprives me of adequate study and revision during vacation	214 49.5%	145 33.6%	20 5.3%	50 11.6%	3.21	0.98
3	I feel reluctant to borrow library materials due to short loan duration	196 45.4%	118 27.3%	52 12.4%	63 14.9%	3.04	1.04
4	The manual process of charging is too slow and time wasting	236 54.6%	106 24.5%	38 9.2%	49 11.7%	3.23	0.96

Key: SA (4) = strongly agree, A (3) = agree, D (2) = disagree, SD (1) = strongly disagree
Standard deviation = σ

Table 4 shows that four items were listed for students to respond and indicate the extent policy on charging and discharging affects students' use of library in the two studied federal university in North-central, Nigeria. The responses revealed that all the four items produced high mean scores above 2.50 benchmark. These items include item 1: the number of books allowed to be borrowed by library users at a time is inadequate for my study ($x=3.18$), item 2: the policy on return of library materials before vacation deprives them of adequate study and revision during vacation ($x=3.21$), item 3: I feel reluctant to borrow library materials due to short loan duration ($x=3.02$) and item 4: the manual process of charging is too slow and time wasting ($x=3.23$). All these items showed that policy on charging and discharging negatively affects students use of library in the two studied Universities.

Discussion of the Findings

The result revealed that the use of library by undergraduate students in North-Central, Nigeria is low. The low level of the use of the university libraries by the undergraduate students could be as a result of Internet facilities available to everybody including the students'. This finding is similar to that of Onwudinjo, Ogbonna and Nwadiogwa (2015) who revealed that the use of library by law students is relatively low. Similarly, the study also revealed that library policies such as payment of low overdue fine have negative effect on the use of the library resources by the undergraduate students because some students keep the borrowed books without returning them when due since they can afford the overdue fine. This attitude shows that the overdue policy in the studied libraries is low and so it negatively affects students' use of the library resources. This finding is similar to that of Okuonghae, Ijeh and Erhabor (2018) which revealed that the refusal of students to return over-due book usually affect other students use of university libraries in Ondo and Ekiti state of Nigeria. Also Eruvwe, Akpojotor and Okonoko (2015) reported that library resources if not returned when due may not be effortlessly found when required. Therefore, it is necessary for a good library policy to be formulated to guide library users, and library users are expected to adhere strictly to these policies. The study shows that charging and discharging policy is one of the important policies that could attract students for effective use of library resources. Unfortunately, students are not attracted to the library by the charging and discharging policy because the students indicated that they are not allowed to borrow adequate reading resources and at the same time the duration of time given to them to use the resources before returning them is inadequate. This result is contrary to Bhatt (2011) who concluded that, the number of books that the library users are allowed to borrow is adequate in a study of student's perception of charging fines for overdue books in Islamia College of Science and Technology, Malaysia

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that Library policies are important variables for effective use of library by undergraduate students in the studied universities. It is therefore necessary for the two studied university libraries in North-central, Nigeria to review their policies on overdue charges, charging and discharging activities in order to positively attract students to use the library. With this in place, it is expected that the use of library by undergraduate students in the two universities in North-central, Nigeria will tremendously improve.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby provided:

1. Library Management should review some policies such as charges on overdue resources. It is only when such charges are increased that students would strive to return library resources when due and hence allow others have access to these resources.
2. The policy on number of books to be borrowed by users at a time should be reviewed by the library management, in order to enable users have access to more resources at a time.

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