
Evaluation of Users' Satisfaction with Circulation Policy on Library Fines in University Libraries in Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate users' level of satisfaction with circulation policy on fines in university libraries in the North Central Zone of Nigeria. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 600 registered library users for the study from four university libraries in the zone. A total of one research question was raised and one hypothesis formulated to guide the study. A self-constructed questionnaire was constructed and used for data collection. The data collected were analysed by using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question, while z-test statistical technique was used to test the formulated hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that there were no significant differences between federal and state universities in users' level of satisfaction with library fines. The study concluded, among others, that there was no significant difference between federal and state owned Universities.

Keywords

Circulation Policies, Satisfaction, Users and Fines.

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INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of any library is to satisfy the interest of its users. The user community is the most important component of a library. How well this purpose is served is a measure of the effectiveness of that library service. The library is therefore to conduct analysis of the user community in order to provide efficient and effective service. This analysis is vital for the systematic development of the collection and the planning of suitable services for the effective utilization of the collection (Seneviratne, 2006).

According to Demekaa (2014) a library that is well organized and well run is one which generally has well-written library policies in place. Library policy is the key to a library that runs smoothly. If the policy is unclear, out-dated, or is not enforced, chances are that the library is in chaos. In order to avoid the chaos, a library creates policies that let library employees know what is expected of them, patrons what services are available, and what behaviours are, and are not, acceptable in the library environment (Demand Media Inc, 2012). Library circulation comprises the activities around the lending of library books and other materials to users of a library. A circulation department is one of the key departments of a library. The main public service point is the circulation desk or loans desk, usually found near the main entrance of a library. It provides lending services and facilities for return of loaned items. Renewal of materials and payment of fines are also handled at the circulation desk (Wikipedia, 2012). Circulation of materials is one of the most basic library services. Circulation policies specify who is eligible to borrow books and how many books may be borrowed at a time, for what duration and the penalty (fine) to be paid failure to return as when due. A clear circulation policy must not only be created, but also visibly posted in the library so that all library users understand what may be checked out, by whom, and for how long (Demand Media Inc, 2012). The process of satisfying users' needs has been the primary objective of libraries and librarians, and circulation policies have been formulated in libraries by librarians in part to help meet users' needs (Hernon & Altman, 1996 in Kassim, 2009). University libraries should therefore, be very concerned with how to bring satisfactory services when offering information and data to users, though they (university libraries) are non-profitable organizations. Hence user satisfaction is what university libraries always devote efforts to pursue. User satisfaction comes from service quality, which

is based on whether clients are satisfied or not. Thus, to improve service quality is to provide services that meet users' expectations and satisfy their needs. When users are not satisfied, it is inferred that there is something wrong with the library (Wang & Shieh, 2006). This shows that the primary objective of any library is to satisfy its users.

Applegate (1997) defines user satisfaction as a personal, emotional reaction to a service or product of library. Bitner and Hubbert (1994) suggest that user satisfaction consists of service encounter satisfaction, the consumer's dissatisfaction/satisfaction with a discrete service encounter, and overall service satisfaction; the consumer's overall dissatisfaction/satisfaction with the organization based on all encounters and experiences with that particular organization. Circulation services in the North Central Zone of Nigeria have improved over the past years, but there remains little published scholarship on the topic of circulation policies especially evaluation of users' satisfaction with circulation policy on library fines in Nigerian university libraries. The question now is to what extent does users' satisfaction determine library fines with circulation policies of university libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria. This study is therefore intended to evaluate users' satisfaction with circulation policies on fines in the university libraries in the North Central of Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary purpose of university libraries is to support the curricula of the university and the intellectual activities of staff and students. The libraries are a shared utility for the entire university community. In order to promote reasonable access for each member, the libraries have policies for use of materials. Circulation policies are rules and regulations which stipulate materials that may be checked out, by whom, and for how long (EWU Libraries Circulation and Fines Policies, 2008).

Eastern Washington University (EWU) Library's Circulation Policies on fines states that:

The libraries may demand service charges or fees when library users do not return materials as specified by circulation policies. The purposes of these charges are, first to encourage compliance with the policies and thereby make the materials available to more library users and second, to recover part of the staff and supply costs

of issuing and monitoring overdue materials and replacing items not returned. Library users are responsible for reading, understanding and abiding by the university libraries' circulation policies.

As noted by Nivia - Okpousung (2011) libraries charge fines for information items that are lost, mutilated, stolen and kept beyond due date; that those fines are meant not only to generate income for the libraries but also to serve as deterrent to users who take library rules for granted. In her study of library policies and overdue materials in Delta State Polytechnic Libraries, she found that users were satisfied with library policies on overdue fines and that the users agreed that the policies on penalty for lost items should be strict. Abareh (2001) cited by Adomi (2003) feels that ₦30.00 have been introduced as fines to stop excesses of users who retain reserve books beyond their loan limit (two hours) at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi, Nigeria. Also a user may be denied the use of reserve materials for a determined period. According to him, payment for missing books and borrowers' cards are punitive measures meant to serve as deterrents to delinquent library users and not necessarily avenues to generate funds for the library. Ifidon (1999) goes on to counsel that it is not wise to do this type of antisocial behaviour, because some dishonest users prefer to hold on to a good book and pay overdue fines later. Such users may even allege that a book is lost. To deter this type of antisocial behaviour, such culprits may be requested to replace the book or pay twice the current price. Thus, fines for overdue books could to some extent serve as a source of funds for a library which imposes them on users, but the amount that may accrue from them could be very minimal. Generally, fines are not introduced to generate money for the library, but to serve as punishment to defaulting borrowers of library materials (Ifidon, 1999 cited by Adomi, 2003). In the same vein, EWU, Library (2008) sanctions undergraduate library users on overdue books. There is a three-day grace period, if materials are not returned (during that three day period), there is no fine. Fines are assessed retroactively to first day overdue if materials are returned beyond the grace period. Fines for day one through 20 beyond the due date is \$110.50 per day, per item. Over 20 days; all accrued charges, plus \$12.00 processing fee per item (refundable if item is returned within 6 months of due date), plus replacement costs based on the average cost of academic books (adjusted annually) per book. Libraries transfer all associated charges to student

financial services for collections. The libraries restrict borrowing privileges of any patron owing \$100.00 or more.

Some reasons have been given why users of Ahmadu Bello University library, Zaria, keep borrowed library materials beyond the period allowed on loan. These include sheer greed or lack of consideration for others who have need for these same books (Zaki, 1994). No matter what prompts users to keep library books beyond the loan period, efforts have to be made by the library to make users suffer some penalty. A very common punitive measure imposed on defaulting borrowers is the payment of a fine. It has been reported by Abareh (2001) that special fines of NGN30.00 have been introduced to stop excesses of users who retain reserve books beyond their loan limit (two hours) at Abubakar Tafawa Belewa University Library, (ATBU) Bauchi, Nigeria. Also, a user may be denied the use of reserve materials for a determined period. Anderson (2008) carried out a study on attitudes to library fines among student borrowers in New Zealand academic library and found that majority of the respondents did not think library fines should be abolished that majority agreed that fines for overdue materials encourage borrowers to return materials on time; that majority of the respondents felt fines were a punishment rather than a price or a hire charge but the study was unable to identify significant differences in attitudes among demographic groups because the samples for most groups were too small to analyse.

Kumar (1991) describes two ways that a defaulting borrower could pay overdue fines in a library. According to him, a user who returns an overdue book could be asked to drop the overdue charges in the conscience box or deposit the amount at the circulation section. The conscience box is a locked box with a glass top. The box can be opened later and the amount collected and deposited. However, the practice of asking users to drop overdue fines in a conscience box is not in existence in any Nigerian library, rather, the defaulter pays the fines at the circulation desk. It has been observed by Adomi (2002) that staff users at Delta State University, Abraka do not like paying fines for books they keep beyond the loan period, and some lecturers even demand to know why they have to pay fines for books they use when teaching students. This is also the situation at the University of Benin Library (Adomi 2002). Lyons (1981) in tabulating data on fine charges was extremely difficult because of the variety of institutional practices. There was little

consistency on fine policy charges among the respondents. According to him, charging fines seems to pose many problems for librarians. There does not appear to be any clear direction in dealing with this matter. While a no-fine policy may be ideal for certain libraries, others feel they could not survive without charging fines. In all cases, the methods an institution chooses to encourage prompt return of materials are not as crucial as seeing that the materials themselves are returned. Again, Adomi (2003) reveals the feelings of respondents that overdue fines are to compel users to return borrowed books on time. One of the reasons that overdue fines are introduced in libraries is to force library users to return the materials they have borrowed on time, so that other users can have access to them. Alao (2002) studied students and overdue books in a medical library. Reasons were given for not returning borrowed books when due. Out of thirty four who had not finished with the books, twenty seven did not renew for fear that other readers might have requested the books while seven complained about the library's time consuming return and renewal procedures. Shontz (1999) on the other hand, studied the effects of fines on overdue books in a medical library with results indicating that many other factors besides fines such as convenience renewal and returns, conscientiousness, and time when the user has finished with the items determine when users return library materials.

Edewor (2010) in a study of staff users and overdue fines in Nigerian Polytechnic Libraries discovered that majority of the staff were not sure that the amount fixed as overdue fine was adequate; majority of them wanted overdue fine discontinued and that majority of the respondents preferred to keep a useful book beyond due date. Concerning DELSU library, Adomi (2003) indicates that 65 (45.8%) respondents liked to keep important materials beyond the due date and pay fines later, whereas 59 (41.5%) of them indicated that they would prefer to pay fines and keep important books. Sheer greed or lack of consideration for others who may have need for these same materials is responsible for this attitude (Zaki, 1994). Meagre library fines and the number of users who can easily afford to pay for books kept beyond the due dates is a major contributing factor. For example, the NGN 1.00 per day, as well as the ₦5.00, are ridiculously low price penalties (Adomi, 2003). Raising the amounts would help persuade people to return borrowed books as when due. No matter how relevant or important the books may be to users, it is ethical for them to return materials once the loan

period has expired or they need to renew them. Users are allowed to renew materials twice, but when the semester is in session, they may want to keep materials longer, as there is no opportunity to renew a loan for a third time.

Zaki (1994) and Adomi (2003) also noted that circulation staff do not always collect fines for overdue books, showing that some libraries do not strictly enforce the payment of library fines on defaulting borrowers. This attitude by some of the staff only encourages borrowers to keep books beyond the loan period. Once users notice that a particular circulation desk staff does not collect fines, the tendency is for some delinquent users to return overdue books when that particular staff member is on duty. It is interesting to note that some of the respondents feel bad when asked to pay fines for materials they keep beyond the due date. These users would like to return borrowed materials to the circulation desk after the expiration of the loan period. There are those who do not feel bad when the library asks them to pay library fines. It may also be possible that some of them have the money to pay library fines (Zaki, 1994 and Adomi, 2003). Adomi (2003) regards library fines as a miscellaneous source of funds for the library, as the amount libraries get through fines is usually not enough to execute major projects. Rather, the amount realized is expanded to meet minor library needs. Fines are introduced in libraries to deter borrowers from keeping library materials beyond the loan period. At the Delta State University Library, the amount generated from fines is kept as petty cash and used to meet minor expenses of the library.

It is worthy to note that some of the library users would not like the collection of overdue fines to be discontinued. If overdue fines are discarded in university libraries in Nigeria, it is feared that most library users will hold on to borrowed materials. Should this happen, many users would be denied access to these materials. A delinquent user who is required to pay a fine for an overdue book may not want to keep borrowed materials beyond the due date the next time. Library fines can, therefore, instil some measure of disciplining on users. Library users are aware that library fines are intended to correct delinquent users. Fines are punitive measures against library defaulters who return borrowed materials after the due date. Adomi (2003) and Edewor (2010) also find respondents who felt that it is wrong to ask library staff to forgive defaulters for keeping materials beyond due dates are a little more than

those who feel it is not wrong to do so. It is common to see defaulters begging circulation staff to overlook the fines they have accrued for overdue books. The implication is that a forgiven user may continue to keep borrowed books beyond due dates because they hope that they will be forgiven again. Udoumoh and Okoro (2007), Adomi (2008) also found that what some users do is to ask circulation staff to reduce the library fines they have accrued, especially when the amount is very high. Sometimes, some circulation staff reduce the amount for defaulters. It should be noted that when circulation desk staff refuse outright to forgive or even reduce the fines, some defaulters resort to going to meet a senior library staff member whom they know (friend/relation) to prevail on the circulation staff to forgive the debts or reduce the fines. These friends or relatives use their position to make the circulation staff forgive or cancel the fines. Some users who have influential friends in the library like to keep library materials beyond due dates because they know that their connection in the library will plead on their behalf. Lyons (1981), Udoumoh and Okoro (2007) and Adomi (2008) note that some respondents who would not like overdue fines to be the same amount no matter when the overdue material is returned are more than those who hold the contrary view. If library users are made to pay the same fixed amount, irrespective of when an overdue book is returned, then there will always be the tendency for delinquent users to keep materials with them beyond the due dates. This is because they know that they will not pay more than a fixed amount.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to evaluate users' level of satisfaction with circulation policy on library fines in the federal and state university libraries.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the level of users' satisfaction between federal and state universities regarding circulation policies on library fines?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference between federal and state universities in the users' level of satisfaction with library fines.

SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on users' level of satisfaction with circulation policies in university libraries in the north central Nigeria. It evaluates the users' levels of satisfaction with circulation policies on library fines, in the four university libraries in the six states of North Central Zone by finding out if there is significant difference with category of users' satisfaction by ownership of university (Federal and state) libraries regarding circulation policies on library fines. The North Central Zone of is located in the central of Nigeria and has six states in the zone. The states are Benue, Nassarawa, Niger, Kogi, Kwara and Plateau. Due to time and financial constraints, it was not possible to cover the university library users in the whole of Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in University Libraries in the North Central Zone of Nigeria with particular reference to the undergraduate student library users. Descriptive survey design was adopted to study 12,000 registered regular student library users of the Universities under study. Using 5% of the undergraduate library users' population as

recommended by Onwioduokit (2001), the researchers were able to arrive at 600 respondents for the study. Through stratified random sampling, a total of 600 copies of the instrument were administered out of which 562 retrieved from the users that completed the structured questionnaire correctly. The instrument was validated by experts in Test, Measurement and Evaluation Guidance and Counselling Department in Delta State University, Abraka. Data was collected personally by the researchers. Frequency counts, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question and z-test statistical technique was used to test the formulated hypothesis. The levels of satisfaction from 3.50 – 4.00 were rated as high, while 2.50 – 3.49 as moderate and 2.49 – 1.00 as low. It was used here because the study involved the comparison of two groups (federal and state universities) and the sample size was large.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is devoted to presentation and discussion of the results of the study. The results are presented in tables based on each of the research questions and research hypotheses.

Table 1 User's Satisfaction with Library Fines in Federal and State Universities

S/N	Items	Type of Institution	N	Σx	\bar{X}	SD	Satisfaction Level
1.	Fine for overdue books/materials	Federal	336	1150	3.40	.72	Moderate
		State	226	766	3.30	.69	Moderate
2.	Fine paid for lost items	Federal	336	1064	3.10	.77	Moderate
		State	226	728	3.20	.73	Moderate
3.	Fine for damaged items	Federal	336	1027	3.00	.83	Moderate
		State	226	728	3.20	.73	Moderate
4.	Borrower's financial liability for lost materials	Federal	336	1054	3.10	.81	Moderate
		State	226	699	3.00	.79	Moderate

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation of User's Satisfaction with Library fines in federal and state universities, Source: Field Survey, 2013

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of users' level of satisfaction with library fines by undergraduate library users. Libraries charge fines for information resources that are lost, mutilated, stolen and kept beyond due date. These fines are mean not only to generate fund for libraries but to also serve as deterrent for users who take library rules for granted (Nina-Okposung, 2011).

The data in Table 1 revealed the moderate mean of 3.4 for the federal universities respondents' level of satisfaction with the amount which defaulting users pay for overdue books/materials, slightly lower (but moderate) than the mean of 3.3 for state universities. The respondents' high level of satisfaction with overdue fines could be due to low amount libraries charge as overdue fines. Low amount encourage users to keep important materials beyond due date

(Zaki, 1994; Adomi, 2003; Nwalo, 2003; Nina-Okposung, 2011). The finding of this study corroborate Adomi (2003) who found that some users of Delta State University were satisfied fines because they force users to return borrowed items promptly. The mean for amount paid for library lost items attracted the moderate mean of 3.1 in federal universities and 3.2 in state universities. These finding corroborates Nina-Okposung (2011) who

found that users of Polytechnic Libraries in Delta State were satisfied with penalty for defaulters and therefore agreed that the policy for defaulting users should be strict. However, while the lowest moderate mean for respondents from federal universities is 3.0 for amount paid for damage items, that from state universities is also 3.0 but in connection with making users liable for lost borrowed items.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 21 z-test analysis of users' level of satisfaction with library fines in federal and state universities

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	z-calculated value	z-critical value	Level of significance	Remark
Federal universities	336	12.86	1.96	560	.45	1.96	0.05	Retain null hypothesis
State universities	226	12.78	2.09					

Table 2: z-test analysis of users' level of satisfaction with library fines in federal and state universities

The result on Table 2 shows that the calculated z-value is .45 and the critical z-value is 1.96 at df of 560. The calculated z-value is less than the critical z-value, therefore the null hypothesis is retained. This shows that there is no significance between federal and state universities on users' level of satisfaction with library fines in university libraries. This finding corroborates Adomi (2003) who found respondents satisfaction with fines.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is no significant difference between federal and state universities in users' level of satisfaction with library fines in university libraries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended in the light of the findings:

- The university libraries in the North Central Zone of Nigeria should extend their opening hours on Sundays from the present 3.00pm – 6.00 pm to 3.00pm – 10.00pm to create more room for borrowers to return borrowed books in order avoid been fined.
- The libraries should ensure that their circulation policies on fines for damaged and lost materials reflect the present realities/cost of the items.

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