

PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AVAILABLE IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN PLATEAU AND NASARAWA STATES

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the “Public relations practices available in federal university libraries in Plateau and Nasarawa States.” The study adopted descriptive survey research design anchored on two objectives, two research questions; and two hypotheses. The population of the study was 168 library staff drawn from the university libraries under study. The entire population was adopted as sample because it was manageable. Questionnaire tagged Public Relations Practice Available in Federal University Libraries in Plateau and Nasarawa States Questionnaire (PRPAFULPNSQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to content validity by two experts from the Department of Library and Information Science and one expert in Test and Measurement unit of the Department of Educational Foundations, the instrument was also tested for reliability, The average cronbach alpha value for the reliability test of the study was 0.82. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data and answer research questions. The study revealed that library staff in federal university libraries under study rendered services that facilitated good public relations practice such as weekly monitoring of readers services, advertising library display and exhibitions, educating users through directional guides while Lack of ICT skills, cost of sponsorship, low awareness of public relations, poor appreciation of the profession among public and private organization leaders, absence of specific media platform, financial constraints, infrastructural limitations, poor usage of social media, lack of specialization in the profession among others were found to be problems that hinder effective public relations in university libraries. The study recommended that the need for library staff to improve competencies better in the areas of public relations and more funds and adequate facilities should be provided to accommodate large volumes of reference activities

Keywords: Public relations, Federal university libraries, Plateau and Nasarawa states.

Introduction

University Libraries are integral part of the entire university environment the ultimate goal of university library is to serve users at any point in time as well as give out quality information services in terms of currency, relevance, accuracy and ease of use to meet and satisfy the information needs of users where the library fails then satisfactory and effective library services have not been rendered. In other words, library users must be satisfied with the services provided by the library and services provided must be able to meet their information needs in the right time and format as desired. Satisfaction of user's needs and attention to their complaints should be the guiding principle for effective library services in this 21st century (Joy & Idowu, 2014). Oyeniyi, cited in Ojohwoh (2015), identified the following as public relations activities in libraries:

1. Library as an agency for the conservation of knowledge.
2. Library as an information agency.
3. Library as an educational agency.
4. Library as an agency for research and development.
5. Library as an agency for recreation and aesthetics.

The author further explained that public relations in university libraries today involve complete analysis and understanding of all the factors that influences people's attitude towards the library. Through its activities, libraries impacts on the life of people as such people's opinion greatly affect the wellbeing of the library.

Through its activities, libraries impacts on the life of people as such people's opinion greatly affect the wellbeing of the library. Public relation in the library begins to operate as soon as the users step inside the front door of the library. Adewusi (2014), stressed that any library activity directly or indirectly is an act of public relations in as much as it is done to promote the library's image and use. In line with this, Pranashere (2019) refers to public relations as a variety of activities conducted by a company to promote and protect the image of the company, its products and policies in the eyes of the public. Any institution is secured only as long as it commands the fullest measure of public understanding and support. Nnamani (2016), buttresses this point by explaining public relations as been framed on the art and science of creating and maintaining mutual understanding and acceptance between human individuals, groups, organizations, companies etc. According to Ibe (2014), effective library services are those services performed by libraries for the benefit of the general public whom they are meant to serve. Satisfaction therefore is the parameter to judge whether a user was satisfied with the service provided at the level of consumption. The satisfaction derived by users greatly influences the utilization of services rendered by libraries. The reference librarian plays the role of public relations officer for

University of Jos and Federal University of Lafia libraries. He or she communicates with the public with the view to shaping public sentiments and to carve a good image of the library in the minds of potential users. Similarly Israel (2012), opined that the reference librarian is a link between the library and the outside world; he or she is a bridge which brings together library activities being done in isolation, coordinates the services of the library at the service point (reference desk) and blows the library's trumpet through the provision of information to make known the activities of the library. A good number of academic libraries offer so many commercial services unknown to users, it is the duty of the librarian to inform the public about such services (Israel, 2012). This is because the librarian is an intermediary between the users and the library. The librarians have a lot to do to make the services of the library a success because they are the image makers of the library. Their activities can make or mar the image of the library. It is therefore necessary for librarians to market and rebrand library services to conform to the current dispensation building positive image or impression for the library and themselves.

Many problems that occur in organizations are attributed to defective or ineffective communication or deficiency in organizational public relations practice. In the same vein, Shidi and Sambe (2019), gave the following as problems of library public relations practice.

- I. Difficulty in attending to/satisfying library publics with varied needs and preferences
- II. Lack of conscious plan to attract goodwill
- III. Ignorance of the benefits of library public relations
- IV. Cost of sponsorship of public relations activities
- V. Inadequate financial allocations
- VI. Personal and selfish interest of some staff
- VII. Negative attitudes of people regarding the role of libraries
- VIII. Inadequate attention being paid to library development
- IX. Lack of social media skills, lack of knowledge about Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- X. Lack of internally accepted media
- XI. Lack of recognition
- XII. Difficulty in establishing library public relations image
- XIII. Poor understanding of library public relations concept

XIV. Lack of specialization in the area of public relations

XV. Inability of some library staff to embrace new technologies (pgs 76-81)

Based on the challenges of library public relations practice in academic libraries, the following recommendations were given by (Udofot & Sambe, 2021).

- I. There should be improvement in fund allocation to academic libraries
- II. There should be media acceptance for the utilization of modern techniques and demonstration of high-level creativity to the success of library public relations practice
- III. Library public relations practitioners in academic libraries should update their ICT skills to cope with the emerging trend
- IV. Library management should be ready to undertake the sponsorship of library public relations programmes
- V. Library public relations practitioners should adequately understand and appreciate the concept and role of library public relations practice in academic libraries in Nigeria
- VI. Library public relations practitioners should embrace on, and make the modern library public relations activities in academic libraries their comfort zone and be eager to accept and embrace change.

Purpose of the Study.

The purpose of this study is to examine and better understand public relation practice and provide insights that will contribute to public relation practice.

1. Find out the public relations practices available in the federal universities in Plateau and Nasarawa States respectively.
2. Identify the problems that hinder effective public relations practice in the federal universities under study.

Research Questions

1. What are the public relations practices available in the Federal Universities under study?
2. What are the problems that hinder effective public relations practice in the federal universities under study?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO₁: public relations practices available in the federal universities under study do not significantly influence job performance of library staff.

HO₂: the problems that hinder effective public relations practice do not significantly influence job performance of library staff in the federal universities under study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1: Public relations practices available in the federal universities under study?

Table 1: Public Relations Practices Available for job Performance of Library Staff in University Libraries

S/No	Item	Available	Not available	Remarks
1	Weekly monitoring of readers services	100	0	Available
2	Advertising library display and exhibitions	100	0	Available
3	Creating awareness on the use of library notice/billboards	100	0	Available
4	Educating users through directional guides	93.3	6.7	Available
5	Participating in book talks	84.8	15.2	Available
6	Rendering voluntary services	84.8	15.2	Available
7	Marketing library publications	74.4	25.6	Available
8	Organizing library week	69.5	30.5	Available
9	Creating refreshment/relaxation corners	60.4	39.6	Available
10	Organizing media activities and special events on radio, television etc.	48.8	51.2	Not Available
11	Organizing user orientation/instruction	47.0	53.0	Not Available
12	Organizing book fairs	25.6	74.4	Not Available
13	Preparing press releases	22.6	77.4	Not Available
14	Monitoring suggestion boxes	16.5	83.5	Not Available
15	Encouraging the use of public information desks	13.4	86.6	Not Available

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Table 2: presents information on public relations practices available for job performance of library staff in federal universities under study. The table shows that out of the total number of 164 respondents sampled respondents comprising 164(100.0%) agreed that weekly monitoring of readers services, advertising library display and exhibitions, creating awareness on the use of library notice/billboards are public relations practices available for job performance of library staff while 15.3(93.3%) agreed that educating users through directional guides is a public relations practice available for job performance of library staff while 11(6.7%) of the respondents disagreed. 139(84.8%) of the respondents agreed that participating in book talks is public relations practice available for job performance of library staff 25(15.2%) disagreed, 139(84.8%) of the respondents agreed that rendering voluntary services is a public relations practice available for job performance 25(15.2%) of the respondents disagreed, 122(74.4%) agreed that marketing library publications is a public relations practice available for job performance of library staff 42(25.6%) disagreed, 114(69.5%) of the respondents agreed that organizing library week is a public relations practice available 50(30.5%) disagreed, 99(60.4)% of the respondents agreed that creating refreshment/relaxation corners is public relations practice available for job performance of library staff 65(39.6%) disagreed. 80(48.8%) agreed that organization of media activities and special events on radio and television is a public relations practice available for job performance 84(51.2%) disagreed. 77(47.0%) of the respondents agreed that organizing user orientation and instruction is a public relations practice available for job performance of library staff, 87(53.0%) disagreed. 42(25.6%) of the respondents agreed that organizing book fairs is a public relations practice available for job performance of library staff 122(74.4%) disagreed, 37(22.6%) agreed that preparation press releases is a public relations practice available for job performance of library staff 127(77.4%) disagreed, 27(16.5%) agreed that monitoring suggestion boxes is a public relations practice available 13(83.5%) disagreed, and 22(13.4%) agreed that encouraging the use of public information desks is a public relation practice available for job performance of library staff in university libraries 142(86.6%) disagreed.

This shows that the respondents agreed that weekly monitoring of readers services, advertising library display and exhibitions, creating awareness on the use of library notice/billboards, educating users through directional guides, participating in book talks, rendering voluntary services, marketing library publications, organizing library week, and creating refreshment/relaxation corners are public relations practices available in their libraries. While they disagreed with organizing media activities and special events on radio and television, user orientation and instruction, book fairs, preparation of press releases, monitoring suggestion boxes, and encouraging the use of public information desks as public relation practices available in their libraries.

Research Question 2: Identify the problems that hinder effective public relations in the federal universities under study?

Table 2: Mean/Standard Deviation of the Problems that Hinder Effective Public Relations in University Libraries

S/No	Item	N	M	STD	Remarks
1	Lack of ICT skills by public relations officers	164	3.01	0.61	Agree
2	Language barrier due to increase in communication platform	164	3.50	0.57	Agree
3	Cost of sponsorship	164	3.68	0.46	Agree
4	Low awareness of public relations and its meaning in libraries	164	3.53	0.50	Agree
5	Poor appreciation of the profession among public and private organization leaders	164	3.53	0.50	Agree
6	Absence of specific media platform	164	3.45	0.49	Agree
7	Financial constraints	164	3.45	0.49	Agree
8	Infrastructural limitations	164	3.35	0.47	Agree
9	Poor usage of social media	164	3.35	0.47	Agree
10	Lack of specialization in the profession	164	3.15	0.70	Agree
11	Lack of ethics by the existing professionals and organizations	164	2.50	1.00	Agree
Mean and S.D			3.31	0.56	Agree

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey, 2025*

Table 7 presents information on problems that hinder effective public relations in federal universities under study. The table showed that all the items have mean scores above the cut-off benchmark of 2.50. Thus, base on the boundary criteria set for decision making, it therefore implies that since the mean scores for items 1-11 in table 7 on problems that hinder effective public relations in university libraries were all above the cut-off point of 2.50 it means respondents agreed with the view that, lack of ICT skills by public relations officers, language barrier due to increase in communication platform, cost of sponsorship, low awareness of public relations and its meaning in libraries, poor appreciation of the profession among public and private organization leaders, absence of specific media platform, financial constraints, infrastructural limitations, poor usage of social media, lack of specialization in the profession, and lack of ethics by the existing professionals and organizations are problems that hinder effective public relations in university libraries. The clustered mean of 3.31 with standard deviation of 0.56 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50

which means that all the problems listed in table 7 constitute hindrance to effective public relations in university libraries.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Public relations practices available in Federal Universities in Plateau and Nasarawa states do not significantly influence job performance of library staff in the federal universities under study.

Table 3: Chi-square (χ^2) test of Influence of Public Relations Practices on job Performance of Library Staff in in federal universities under study.

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of D s of f Sig.	χ^2_{cal}	p-value	Remark	
Not-available	127	82.0	45.0	0.05	1	49.390	0.00	Sig.
Available	37	82.0	-45.0					
Total	164							

Table 3 revealed that the value of chi-square calculated (χ^2_{cal}) = 49.390, with df = 1, and p = 0.00. Since the p-value is less than alpha value of 0.05 at 1 degree of freedom, therefore the null hypothesis which states that, public relations practices available in Federal Universities in Plateau and Nasarawa States do not significantly influence job performance of library staff in university of Jos and Federal University, Lafia was rejected. This implies that available public relations practices in these federal universities have significant influence on job performance of library staff in university libraries.

Hypothesis 2: The problems that hinder Public Relations Practice do not significantly Influence Job Performance of Library Staff in the Federal Universities under study.

Table 4: Chi-square (χ^2) test of the Influence of the Challenge of Public Relations Practice on Job Performance of Library Staff in Federal Universities under study.

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of D s of f Sig.	χ^2_{cal}	p-value	Remark
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Disagree	30	54.7	-24.7	0.05	2	61.51	0.00	Sig.
						2		
Agree	102	54.7	47.3					
Strongly Agree	32	54.7	-22.7					
Total	164							

Table 4 revealed that the value of chi-square calculated (χ^2_{cal}) = 61.512, with df = 2, and p = 0.00. Since the p-value is less than alpha value of 0.05 at 2 degrees of freedom, therefore the null hypothesis which states that, the challenge of public relations practice does not significantly influence job performance of library staff in Federal Universities in Plateau and Nasarawa states was rejected. This implies that the challenges of public relations practice observed in this study have influence on job performance of library staff in university libraries.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that library staff in federal university libraries in Plateau and Nasarawa states, though faced with few challenges that hinder effective public relations practice possess some of the relevant skills required for effective public relations practice.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the survey, the following recommendations were made:

1. The need for library staff to improve competencies better in the areas of public relations
2. Library staff should have a conscious plan and participate in community engagement to enhance brand visibility and facilitate goodwill.
3. Library staff should have an internally accepted media platform to utilize and connect with users
4. More funds and adequate facilities should be provided to accommodate large volumes of reference activities.

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