AN EVALUATION OF WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, BAUCHI, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper studies the workplace communication in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library Bauchi. It employed the use of the questionnaire to study channel of communication used between superior officers and among colleagues and which channel most preferred. Other areas studied include the perception of staff about workplace communication and the challenges associated with communication in the library. It was discovered that staff prefer formal communication with their superior but communicate verbally with their colleagues. They agreed that communication from superior is adequate but not timely. However, the use of cell phones is not encouraging. The staffs are also comfortable with the channels of communication used in the library. The study recommends the use of cell

Introduction

Communication is the life wire of any organization striving to provide the needed services. It is the channel through which responsibilities are assigned, rules and regulations are established, and management gets information on how to run the organization. Kreps (1990) observed that Communication in an organization serves to establish managerial control, provides workers with job instruction, and enable managers to gather information for planning. Workplace communication is the exchange of information, both verbal and written among members of staff of an organization. This communication can be from superior to subordinates, between colleagues or from

*p*hone in communication and improvement informal communication and formal communication should be timely.

Subordinates to superiors. According to Ifidon & Ifidon (2007), communication is such an important element of management that it deserves a special treatment. People communicate every day from when they wake up until they go to bed. This process goes on in every unit of society and in every discipline, including librarianship. It is through communication that people share ideas, knowledge and information that are necessary for serving their customers. Mcshane, (2012) stated that communication is the glue that binds people together and acts as part of the dynamic social support that eases or reduces work-related stress in librarians.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Communication is the livewire that moves organizations to achieve their objectives. Workplace communication is essential to any organization striving to succeed in its service delivery particularly libraries which are service oriented. This study will, therefore, throw light on the workplace communication in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library (ATBU) Bauchi to see the area where improvement is necessary so that effective communication is attained and the goals and objectives of the library are achieved.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to answer the following questions

- ➢ Which channel of communication is mostly used among the staff of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library Bauchi
- ➢ What is the perception of staff about workplace communication in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library Bauchi
- ➢ Which category of the staff do they communicate mostly in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library Bauchi

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ➢ To determine the channel of communication mostly used by the staff of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library Bauchi.
- ➢ To find out the perception of staff of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library Bauchi about their workplace communication.
- ➢ To ascertain the category of staff they communicate with mostly in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library Bauchi

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication is the channel used to achieve productivity in any organization particularly in academic libraries. According to Bolarinwa & Olorunfemi (2009) communication is the means by which people are linked together, how they function in to achieve a common goal. While Onuoha (1991) Cited by Hybels, & Weaver, (2011). Referred to it as the process of transmitting meaning, ideas, and information from the sender to receiver. Hybels & Weaver (2001) considered communication as any process in which people share information, ideas, and feelings and that it involves not only the spoken and written words but also body language, personal mannerism, and style. Stressing the importance of workplace communication.

Kreps (1990) stated that communication in an organization serves to established managerial control, provides workers with job instruction and enable managers to gather information for planning. Communication can be done in diverse ways, it can be through language signals, facial expressions, music, body movement, and gestures. In an organization, communication can be both formal and informal. Ajayi (2001) observed that the extent to which the formal and informal channels of communication are used within the library depends upon the types, size, complexity, corporate culture, and organization of libraries and how well they integrate information and communication technology into the general function and activities of the library.

Workplace communication in an organization is essential if the goal of the organization is to be achieved. This is more so in academic libraries whose stock in trade is to provide services to the academic community and beyond. Ifidon & Ugwanyi (2013) stated that in the present era of the knowledge economy and information globalization, employers of labor and the employee require a level of communication competence, much as this applies to all

human interactions, it is most important and relevant to library managers and workers.

According to Wikipedia (2016), Workplace communication is the exchange of information between employees of an organization. It is the process of exchanging information, both verbal and nonverbal within an organization. Koontz & Weihrich (2005), opine that workplace communication is the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver with information being understood by the receiver. In essence, for workplace communication to be effective, the information must not only be received but must be understood by the recipient.

Academic libraries comprise of people whose duties are coordinated with a view to achieving both individual and collective goals. Academic libraries are established to assist library client and staff associated with each other in the interest of the overall organizational objectives. Workplace communication, therefore, becomes enviable. Ifidon & Ugwanyi (2013) writing on academic libraries observed that poor communication is a great source of frustration in any organization let alone academic libraries, and it contributes significantly to reduce services.

In the same vein, Onuoha (1991) observed that barriers and associated problems common with workplace communication climate affect work productivity negatively especially where people and records are jointly managed together, such as the case of academic libraries. He listed barriers to communication to include

- ➢ Communication overload.
- ➢ Badly expressed message.
- ➢ Inappropriate medium/language.
- ➢ Poor listening/decode and premature arising from lack of understanding.
- ➢ Grapevine with an informal organization within organizations.
- ➢ Hostility between the participants.
- ➢ Bureaucracy.

According to Ifidon & Ifidon (2007), these barriers can be overcome in the following ways

- ➢ Be sensitive to others feelings and needs while speaking or writing.
- ➢ Use of face to face communication enhances effective and accurate encoding and decoding of messages.

- ➤ Avoid credibility gap.
- ➤ The sender of messages must be careful about how they make a judgmental statement

METHODOLOGY

The methodology proposed for this study was cross-sectional survey research that involved the use of quantitative data collection procedures. In this study, the population comprised 80 staff of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library. Of this number, 13 were absent as at October 2017 when the questionnaire was administered. They were either on leave of absence, study fellowship or annual leave. 65 staff was therefore served with the questionnaire out of which 50 were returned, giving the response rate of 74.6%. The close-ended questionnaire centered on bio-data of staff, length of service and the research questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS
TABLE 1: GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

Sex of Respondents	Responses	Percentage
Male	42	84%
Female	8	16%
Total	50	100%

Source: (Office of the University Librarian, ATBU Bauchi)

Table 1 shows the gender response rate of the respondents' base on gender, that male staffs are the majority respondents with 42 (84%), while female respondents were 8 (16%). The result reveals that male respondents have highest job enrolment in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library. Culture and religion may possibly play a vital role here, because Hausa/Fulani, as well as Muslims predominantly live in that part of Nigeria, (North-East), where Males are been given priority to pursue a western education at a higher level, which give an opportunity for jobs. Although the percentage of female respondents is encouraging, this may be due to awareness of the importance of girl child education.

TABLE II: CATEGORIES OF STAFF

Staff Disposition	Responses	Percentage
Academic Staff	10	20%
Non-Teaching Staff	40	80%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Source: (Office of the University Librarian, ATBU Bauchi)

Table II shows the category of staff in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, this reveals that 40(80%) are nonteaching staff while 10(20%) are academic staff. And it shows that the library staff consists mostly of 2 categories of staff, and the non teaching staffs are the majority, this may be possible as a result of lower qualification as the criteria for being employed as a non teaching staff conversely to academic staff which is a minimum of Bachelors Degree and in some cases postgraduate degrees.

TABLE III: YEARS OF WORKIN EXPERIENCE

Respondents work experience		
0-5	22	55%
5-10	3	6%
11-15	2	4%
16-20	5	10%
21-25	7	14%
26-30	4	8%
30 and above	7	16%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table ii reveals the work experience of the respondents, 22(55%) had between 0-5 working experience which is the majority, while those between 11-15 work experience are the less which account for only 2(4%). The result shows that most of staff in the library are young and fresh, and from the category of staff disposition, we can conclude that those that put between 0-5 years working experience ate nonacademic and new employees. This may be due to massive employment conducted during that period to replace those

that left the system. Some were employed as a result of the expansion of the library.

TABLE IV: CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION WITH SUPERIORS IN ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, BAUCHI.

Respondents channel of communications	Responses	Percentage
Circulars	29	34%
Meetings	12	14%
Committees	9	11%
Verbal	14	17%
Phone calls	11	13%
Text messages	8	9%
E-mails	2	2%
Total	**85**	**100%**

N.B: Increase in response was as a result of multiple choices by the respondents.

Table IV reveals the views of the respondents on the channels of communication used by their superiors to communicate with them. 29(34%) indicated the use of circular, verbal communication represent 14(17%) and the least was e-mail which recorded only 2(2%). This shows that communication between superiors and subordinate is mostly formal through the use of circulars.

TABLE V: MOST PREFERRED CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION WITH SUPERIORS IN ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, BAUCHI.

Respondents most preferred channel of communications	Responses	Percentage
Circulars	17	31%
Meetings	8	15%
Committees	7	13%
Verbal	11	20%

Phone calls	4	7%
Text messages	4	7%
E-mails	3	7%
Total	**54**	**100%**

N.B: Increase in response was as a result of multiple choices by the respondents.

Table V indicated respondent's views on the most preferred channels of communication with their superiors. 17(31) respondents preferred circulars, followed by verbal communication 11(20%). The least remain e-mails 3(7%). Findings reveal that the use of electronic medium of communication in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library is very low, despite the fact that there is an internet connectivity in every unit of the library, but this simple and the most effective way of communication is not adequately been utilized.

TABLE VI: QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION RECEIVED FROM SUPERIORS IN ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, BAUCHI.

Quality of communications received from respondents	Responses	Percentage
Clear	20	30%
Ambiguous	7	11%
Timely	7	11%
Appropriate	14	21%
Adequate	12	18%
Inadequate	6	9%
Too much	-	0%
Total	**66**	**100%**

N.B: Increase in response was as a result of multiple choices by the respondents.

Table VI sought the views of respondents on the quality of information received from their superiors. 20(30%) are of the opinion that information is usually clear, 14(21%) said it is appropriate. Only 6(9%) are not satisfied.

Interestingly none is of the view that there is information overload. This supports the views expressed by Ifidon & Ugwanyi (2013) that when workers happily delivered their services as a result of a proper understanding of the management communication, then workers and patrons are satisfied.

TABLE VII: CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION WITH COLLEAGUES IN ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, BAUCHI.

Channels of communications	Responses	percentage
Meetings	15	19%
Committees	6	8%
Verbal	25	32%
Phone calls	16	21%
Text messages	12	15%
E-mails	4	5%
Total	**78**	**100%**

N.B: Increase in response was as a result of multiple choices by the respondents.

Table VII presents the views of respondents on the channels mostly used to communicate with their colleagues. 25(32%) communicate verbally, 16(21%) through phone calls, 15(19%) through meetings, 12(15%) by text messages, 6(8%) through committees and 4(5%) use the e-mail. This supports the view that face to face communication is highly information-rich because it utilizes multiple channels to reinforce a message. Face to face communication also provides opportunities for immediate response.

As to who they communicate with, most staff represented by 33(66%) communicate with their colleagues mostly as against 9(18%) and 8(16%) who communicate mostly with their subordinates and superiors respectively. This explains why verbal communications dominate communication among colleagues as explain in table VII. This may be attributed to the fact that they feel free with their colleagues and the fact that verbal communication dominates communication among colleagues of the library.

TABLE VIII: ADEQUACY OF WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION IN ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, BAUCHI

Adequacy of workplace communications	responses	percentage
Very adequate	10	20%
Adequate	27	54%
Fairly adequate	9	18%
Not adequate	4	8%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Respondents were asked to rate workplace communication in the library, the views as presented in table VIII indicates that 27(54%) consider it to be adequate, 10(20%) very adequate, 9(18%) opined that it is fairly adequate and only 4(8%) are of the opinion that it is not adequate. The staff of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi is therefore satisfied with their workplace communication. This corroborates Ifidon & Ugwanyi (2013) observation that if libraries are to survive the present global organizational competitiveness and be able to make an indelible impact on their clienteles and academic circle, their workers must have a good understanding of the indispensable need for communication proficiency and effectiveness.

FINDINGS

The study examined the workplace communication among staff of Abubakar tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi. It was revealed that circulars top the channels used by superiors to communicate with staff and staff also preferred to be communicated through the same channels and subordinates. This implies that staff understands the circulars and want it to be maintained. Findings on channels of communication with colleagues revealed that verbal communication takes the stage. This informal communication is used by staff to communicate with their colleagues. This portrays cordial working relationships among the staff of the library. When staff communicates effectively, there is the tendency to have improved services which leads to the achievement of organizational goals. It was also discovered that the use of

electronic medium of communication is making an appreciable impact on the staff of the library and need to be encouraged

RECOMMENDATIONS

Though the use of electronic media is not the predominant channel, it is gaining appreciable impact which should be encouraged. It is faster and messages reach staff even after office hours if there is the need.

The study revealed that the communication among library staff is just adequate, this is attributed to the channels of communication in use and it is clear, appropriate and adequate. There is likely hood that rumors which are the product of lack of communication is minimal in the library since the communication is not very adequate, it means that there is room for expansion.

CONCLUSION

This paper investigated the workplace communications in Abubakar tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi, Nigeria. It studied the channels of communication between superiors and colleagues and how effective they are.Communications very essential in any organization that seeks to succeed, it is like blood flow in the human body. An effective manager is one who understands that and uses it in his organization. For efficient coordination between material and human elements, effective communication is essential. On the other hand, ineffective communication breeds disorder in an organization. Communication barriers lead to poor service delivery in the library.

Finding revealed that adequate communication on both ends but staff prefer written communication from superiors but communicate face to face. It was recommended that the use of electronic channels of communications be encouraged especially in the present information and communication technology era.

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