

## **Influence of Public Relations Practice on Job Performance of Library Staff in Federal Universities in Plateau and Nasarawa State**

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the “Influence of Public Relations Practice on Job Performance of Library Staff in Federal Universities in Plateau and Nasarawa States, Nigeria”. The study adopted descriptive survey research design anchored on one objective and one hypothesis. The objective of the study was to find out how public relations practice influences job performance of library staff in Federal Universities in Plateau and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. The population of the study was 168 library staff drawn from the universities under study. The entire population was adopted as sample because it was manageable. Questionnaire tagged Influence of Public Relations Practice on Job Performance (IPRPJPQ) was used for data collection while descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data and answer research question while chi-square was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that, the public relations practices influence job performance in university libraries and that public relations practices in these federal universities have significant influence on job performance of library staff in the university libraries. The study recommended that all library staff in higher institutions of learning should embrace public relations so that information resources stored in the libraries can be easily accessed and used by users, there should be an outlined policy which could be a guide to make library staff inform of their role in reference and public relations activities.*

**Keywords:** *Influence, public relations, job performance, library staff, Federal Universities, Plateau, Nasarawa state.*

### **Introduction**

A University library is one of the pillars that hold a university. Its roles in the overall improvement and success in the intellectual development climate of universities cannot be overemphasized. University libraries are attached to universities of different types. They acquire and maintain more complex materials including journals to support post graduate research (Shidi and Sambe 2019).

University of Jos and Federal University of Lafia Library staff like other university library staff are service oriented but to enhance their service delivery, they must not only provide the information resources but also ensure effective utilization of these resources by their user communities. As such, for University of Jos and Federal University of Lafia library staff to be able to relate, understand and meet the demands of the public that they serve at all times, they need to understand the influence of viable public relations practice as a strategy in creating and maintaining constant communication between the library and the university community as well as creating a positive image in the minds of their users through good public relations practices which will in turn enhance job performance.

Public relations is the act of creating and sustaining mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and its publics. According to Israel (2012), it is a management tool that is increasingly becoming important in the management of organizations such as the library, whether private or public, whether they are profit making or nonprofit oriented. Similarly, Udofot and Sambe (2021), opined that the achievement of library objectives is highly dependent on the maintenance of mutual co-operation and understanding of various opinion held by the public. In the same vein, Israel (2012), stressed that the library cannot achieve its aims without the goodwill and co-operation of its public.

Public relations activities are therefore essential to every organization because understanding and satisfying the needs of the public is necessary for organizational growth and survival. Public relation is also a critical tool for enhancement of employee performance, establishing, fostering and developing growth and stability in any organization (Austin and Pinkleton 2015). This explains the benefits that library staff in University of Jos and Federal University of Lafia will derive from the practice of effective public relations because the job performance of an employee is directly proportionate to the success of any organization. In line with this Samuel (2019) asserted that all communication and public relations activities in an organization such as tertiary institutions of learning are mobilized and geared towards achieving effective performance by employees. The author further explained performance as the way in which somebody does a job, judged by its effectiveness or the manner in which somebody functions, operates and behaves.

Job performance is also seen as the act of carrying out or accomplishing a task, or an action in an effective manner for the fulfillment of its intended purposes. Library staff in University of Jos and Federal University of Lafia libraries are fundamental resources and are considered the most valuable asset in the university community. The growth and development of the institution hinges on the level of their job performance in the various units that they render services they are urged to improve and maintain public relations practice between the library and their patrons and also try to improve their professional skills where necessary to further boost their services to their clientele because communication is indispensable to job performance in any organization (Adagala and Michael, 2017). It is in line with the above facts that this study looked at Influence of

public relations practice on job performance of library staff in Federal Universities in Plateau and Nasarawa States, Nigeria, using University of Jos and Federal University Lafia Libraries as a case study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A good corporate image is regarded to be essential for the existence of an organization. The success or failure of an organization largely depends on its cordial relationship with its public (consumers, employees, community etc). One of the efficient ways of creating awareness of university libraries' vast amount of resources is through public relations activities. Public relations activities help to provide a coordinated effort to communicate an acceptable image of the library and promote the availability of the library's services and resources both in print and non-print formats. Good public relations make better contact between the library and the public, so that what is known can be enlarged upon and used more fully. This helps to create a good image for the library which can lead to increase in the utilization of its services and resources thereby increasing job performances of staff in libraries.

Pre-research visit indicate that, in University of Jos and Federal University Lafia libraries, it is common to find library users complain of non-availability of some required library resources and poor knowledge of what is available in the library. On the other hand, University of Jos and Federal University of Lafia library staff complain of underutilization of library services despite the encouragement students usually receive on the need to patronize the library. These problems mentioned above can be related to lack of, or poor public relations practices. This situation, if allowed to persist, may impinge negatively on the overall effectiveness and academic culture of university of Jos and Federal University of Lafia Libraries.

On the part of the library users in these universities, they will no longer find the library beneficial to their academic pursuit while the library staff will no longer put in their best in the discharge of their daily duties since their role in the institution is not recognized by the patrons and parent institutions. This calls for public relations practices to be put in place by library management to help solve the problem to make way for effective job performance of library staff in University of Jos and Federal University of Lafia libraries. To the best knowledge of the researchers, no empirical study had been conducted to assess the influence of public relations practice on job performance of library staff in Federal Universities in Plateau and Nasarawa states. This creates a gap in the literature of the subject that the present study is set to fill.

### **Research Objective**

The objective of the study is to find out how public relations practice influences job performance of library staff in the federal universities in Plateau and Nasarawa States.

### **Research Hypotheses**

HO<sub>1</sub>: Public relations practices available in federal universities in Plateau and Nasarawa States do not significantly influence job performance of the library staff.

## **Literature Review**

The research is premised on System Theory by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, 1968. The System theory propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1968 believes communication helps in defining and sustaining a system. Without communication, a system will suffer so many challenges because the feedback loop or channel is not functioning properly (Von Bertalanffy, 1968). Ludwig believes that every organization is part of a system with three components: the organization, its publics, and its goals and as such, nothing can be explained by isolating a component of that system. In order to gain a better understanding of anything, the system and its holistic properties has to be analyzed to find the problem. This theory finds relevance in the study because communication defines and sustains systems. Public relations practitioners in the library will through effective communication understand the relationship between their organization and its publics as well as the role public relations play in creating and maintaining sound relationships among the library and its public both inside and outside the library.

In conceptual terms, public relations is the art by which organizations such as the library achieve social harmony, acceptance and mutual understanding between the management and its publics. Bannets (as cited in Ojohwoh, 2015), explained public relations as: information given to the public, persuasion directed to modify activities and actions as well as efforts to integrate attitudes and actions of an institution with its public.

Public relations is a function of management in the organizational structure therefore, the purpose of public relation as a structural part of the library is inseparable from the objectives of the organization itself. This is because public relation contributes to the objectives of the library as a whole. Public relation is very relevant in libraries today since it has become the most powerful tool to present the image of the library to the public as all public relations activities involve communication which is needed for the smooth running of university libraries (Sharma, 2015). For libraries to provide effective services to their clientele, they must engage in public relations. This means that the library staff should not sit at a place and wait for users to come to the library, rather they should be able to reach their users with needed information and through this means attract them to the library (Kanwal, 2015). The success of any organization, especially institutions of higher learning, depends on how information is handled in that organization. The effectiveness and efficiency with which information is managed determines to a large extent whether the institution will consistently survive or not. This is why no institution of higher learning can survive without the activities of public relations department because Communication is the cord that holds the various interdependent part of an organization together (Yahaya and Abubakar, 2017). Therefore, in whatever type of library one serves, public relations should be regarded as a prerequisite for the effective functioning of the library and will help promote the services of the library (Israel, 2012).

The purpose of public relations in academic libraries is to help perform the function of communicating necessary information to the entire community of the university which includes faculty, staff, students and stakeholders to enhance their confidence and patronage of the library There are several roles played by public relations in

organizations with regards to organizational communication which also ensures organizational effectiveness.

Similarly, the general functions of public relations in university libraries according to Aiyegunle and Moneme (as cited in Ajibade, 2016) are as follows:

- To increase and expand membership for the exploitation and use of materials.
- To improve image and generate goodwill of the library.
- To increase the morale of staff, build loyalty and improve job performance.
- To serve as a means of propaganda to enlist support, financial or otherwise and to give political and social awareness to the library users and to get people recognize that the library does have something for them and is willing and able to perform the services they need.
- To interpret library policy and earn acceptability of it. This can be achieved by explaining the role of the library in the affairs of the community it serves and to shape and reshape the image of the library in a given situation (P.63).

Properly organized public relations can help establish the library's image and position within the community Alansari, cited in Nzewi (2022). Libraries should be concerned with the images they create in the minds of the public that they serve. This is because users respond to the image they have of the library and not necessarily to its reality. As such the public holding a positive image of an organization patronizes it at all times while those holding a negative image avoids the library. Similarly, Shidi and Sambe, cited in Udofot & Sambe (2021), pointed out that public relations is necessary in the library because it will help erode the decayed public image about the library among its users and also to promote the use of the library especially now that information technology and social media are at the forefront competing with the library for users patronage. The authors further noted that there is serious competition for the parent institutions attention in terms of funding as such it is important for libraries to engage in public relations practice in order to gain the desired attention and confidence in order to enhance patronage and service delivery.

The essence of effective communication and public relations activities is to achieve understanding that has to do with employee performance Israel (2012). The reference librarian's success in handling reference services judiciously from various positions will lead to the general success of the library. The job performance of the librarian according to the author will be influenced by the professional variables such as service as well as attitudes exhibited by the reference librarian. This means that a successful reference librarian cares about clients and enjoys face to face interactions. He or she is not judgmental and cheerfully serves all regardless of their appearances or status. His/her style and manner keeps clients at ease. The reference librarian is careful to ensure that users do not lose face, he ensures interaction and participation. He keeps clients informed of what he or she is doing and why i.e. he is able to explain what has been done and why if possible. The reference librarian avoids premature recommendations, each encounter with a user ends with proper closure which is public relations in display. In all of the above, warmth greetings, eye contact, smiles, friendly voice, cheerful face,

customers see and hear variety of cues that tells them if the reference librarian is genuinely interested in their queries or not. This implies that public relations in university libraries do not only help staff to meet the challenges of providing information to support the academic programs of the university, it also helps to improve upon the individual staff effectiveness (Israel, 2012). Effective public relations practice encourages library staff to improve their work environment through positive contributions.

Today, public relation has become an indispensable part of any organization like the library which aims at achieving set goals. To manage the existing performance of employees and to motivate them for better performance, effective and proper public relations have always been an essential part of management process. Hence coordination, planning, organization, control, and other functions in the absence of effective communication are not realized and the possibility of managing the organization will not be possible (Mairabi, as cited in UfuoPhu-Biri & Ayewumi, 2022). Effective public relation is needed for library management to develop and sustain a competitive advantage for employee's performance and organizational improvement.

According to UfuoPhu-Biri & Ayewumi (2022), most scholars assert that there are additional factors that influence the level of employee performance other than skills, competence, and expertise or professionalism, effective communication in an organization is among the most essential factors that influence employee performance and productivity levels. The authors further stated that employee performance indicates the effectiveness of employee's specific actions that contributes to attaining organizational communication goals.

Rajhans (2012), stated that to manage the present performance of employees towards better performance, efficient communication practices are needed in all organizations. Similarly, Odine (2015), opined that effective communication serves as a reliable vehicle helping employees fulfill their organizational obligation.

Gabriel (2021) carried out a study on "Influence of public relations practice on information service delivery and librarian's image in federal universities in North-Central Nigeria". The study adopted the descriptive survey research design and questionnaire for data collection. A total population of 138 library staff drawn from the university libraries under study was used while the sample adopted the total population in the study area. Descriptive statistics in which frequency distribution tables, percentage tables, and charts were used to analyze data collected. The study revealed the following as services rendered to users in the library within the study area: lending services, inter library loan services, reservation services, exhibition displays, user education service, library publication, referral service, selective dissemination of information, consultancy service, provision of seating and study facilities and reference services. The study recommended introduction of more services and improvement of the existing ones.

## **Methodology**

The paper adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 168 professional and none professional library staff. (32 professionals and 84 none professionals from University of Jos as well as 9 professionals and 43 none



professionals were from Federal University of Lafia. The entire population of 168 professional and none professional library staff was used because it was not too large. This is in line with Bernard (2012), that if the population of a study is less than 200, the researcher should adopt the entire population without sampling. The researcher-developed questionnaire tagged Influence of Public Relations Practice on Job Performance Questionnaire (IPRPJQ) was used for data collection. The researcher administered the questionnaire face to face with the help of two research assistants from each of the university libraries in the study area. 164 copies of the questionnaires were retrieved while 4 copies were not retrieved. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and chi-square to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Data presentation and analysis has been done using tables, mean, and standard deviation in line with research questions that guided the study.

**Table 1: Mean/Standard Deviation of the Influence of Public Relations Practice on job Performance of Library Staff in University Libraries**

S/No	Item	M	STD	Remarks
1	Participating in library display and exhibitions improves my skills	3.17	0.72	Agree
2	Use of library notice/billboards enables me to reach out to users better	3.61	0.64	Agree
3	Directional guides reduce hitches in discharging my services	3.89	0.30	Agree
4	Book talks improves my service delivery	3.73	0.44	Agree
5	Voluntary services enhance my service delivery	3.70	0.45	Agree
6	Library publications improves my skills	3.70	0.45	Agree
7	Library week activities makes me active and happy on the job	3.63	0.48	Agree
8	Media activities and special events on radio, television etc. helps me educate the users more about the library and its services	3.63	0.48	Agree
9	Participating in user orientation/instruction improves my performance as users respond better after the programme	3.39	0.49	Agree
10	Film hour affects my performance positively as it challenges me to prepare for presentations	3.31	0.46	Agree
11	Books fairs makes me rather stressful	3.21	0.49	Agree
12	Press releases keeps me informed	3.21	0.49	Agree

*Influence of Public Relations Practice on ...*

13	Suggestion boxes helps me learn new things to improve my skills	3.21	0.49	Agree
14	Public information desks enable me serve users happily to meet their needs	3.11	0.62	Agree
<b>Clustered Mean/Standard Deviation</b>		<b>3.23</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**N=164**

Table 1 presents information on the influence of public relations practice on job performance of library staff in federal universities under study. The table showed that all the items have mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50 thus, public relations practice influence job performance. The clustered mean of 3.23 with standard deviation of 0.46 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50 which means that all the practices expressed in table 5 influence job performance in university libraries.

**Test of Hypothesis**

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

Table 2 revealed that the value of chi-square calculated ( $\chi_{cal}^2$ ) = 49.390,

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Levels of Sig.	Df	$\chi_{cal}^2$	p-value	Remark
Not-available	127	82.0	45.0	0.05	1	49.390	0.00	Sig.
Available	37	82.0	-45.0					
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>							

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.

**Conclusion**

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that library staff in federal universities in Plateau and Nasarawa states, Nigeria render services that facilitate good public relations practice. It is concluded that, public relations practices in these federal



universities under study have significant positive influence on job performance of library staff in the university libraries.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. All library staff in higher institution of learning should embrace public relations so that information resources stored in the libraries can be easily accessed and used by users.
2. Public relations should be regarded as a prerequisite for the effective functioning of every university library.

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