Effectiveness of Information Sharing among Record Officers in Federal Medical Centers in North West Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract
The paper investigated the effectiveness of information sharing among FMCs (Federal Medical Centers) in North West. This study adopted quantitative research method using interview. The population of the study consists of all the record officers in Federal Medical Centers in North West zone of Nigeria. Data were collected from the record officers of the four (4) Federal Medical Centers that are situated in the North West zone of Nigeria (FMC Birnin Kudu in Jigawa State, FMC Gusau in Zamfara State, FMC Kebbi in Kebbi State and FMC Katsina in Katsina State. The study shows that the Record Officers of these FMCs engage in information sharing practices. It further reveals that CD-ROM and Email are not often use to share information. Television and social networking site are to some extent also available and used to share information among record officers. The result also clearly indicates that there is no policy governing the information sharing among FMCs, there is also problem of staff, budget system and power failure. The study recommends that Government should provide policy/guideline for information sharing among the FMCs.

Key words: Information sharing, effectiveness of information, record officers, federal medical centers.

Introduction

Effective information sharing practice among federal medical centers (FMCs) is very important. For remarkable development and proper functioning of modern hospital activities, effective information sharing is critical. Information sharing practice keeps FMCs up-to-date in rendering efficient support and services to their various user community; this aids effective services. The FMCs can no longer be alone to render services to its patrons without forming information sharing practices with it sister hospitals this is to meet up with the needs of patrons. No matter the capacity of its staff

strength, resources and information, it cannot meet up with the requirement of its patron alone Resource sharing can be traced back to 200 BC, when the Alexandrian Library shared its resources with Pergamum Library. Kraus and Schechter (2015) gave examples of library cooperation among monastery libraries in the 13th century.

The Concept of Information Sharing Among FMCs

The development of record worldwide has been linked to the history of human civilization. According to Gama (2020), the primary concern of record management in public organization is the efficient, effective and economical management of public record. Also, Mohammed and Islam (2013) submitted that resources sharing is typically composed of two activities: the first is collaborative collection development, whereby subject specializations are intended to be assigned among libraries within a clearly defined geographic region so that individual libraries need not attempt to collect resources and services in all fields, but can concentrate on particular field. The guiding principle is to ensure that information is available when and where it is need in an organized in an efficient manner, and in a well maintained environment. Record management assumes a tactical position in the efficient and effective management of any entity. Records management could be dated back to the history of humans because the need for memory is an integral part of survival (Nwaomah, 2019). Goldner and Birch (2021), this has provided an overview of the historical developments in resource sharing and interlibrary loan around the world. The paper discussed the impact of the changes in technology and publishing on resource sharing in the digital age. The authors conducted a PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological) analysis of the factors affecting present day resource sharing and pointed out certain challenges for effective resource sharing in the digital age, such as distributed knowledge bases, incompatible systems and electronic formats, which often prohibit the exchange and sharing of materials among libraries. The authors remarked that librarians need to work together to garner for libraries the same rights to electronic journals and electronic books that had been available for physical materials for decades.

Record keeping could be traced to the ancient days when Papyrus, Stones, Clay tablets, Parchments, Potsherds (Outrace) were used to document information in other to manage history and human activities. Record management and archive administration enhance student learning; they will not have to struggle with areas of the course unit that are not clear to them. Kindly copy and paste the link address as indicated in each study/course unit into a browser and follow the instructions as shown on YouTube while watching the Videos. Durst and Wilhelm (2021) acknowledge that libraries played a major role in South Africa's national life and liberation struggles through cultural and political influences.

Information sharing practice among FMCs is very important and a remarkable development for modern hospitals around the world to function well. Information sharing practice keeps FMCs up-to-date in rendering efficient support and services to their various user communities to aid effective services. The FMCs can no longer be alone to render services to its patrons without forming information sharing practices with sister FMCs in order to meet up the needs of patrons.

Here are some of the roles of a record officer in record and archival centers:

  i.   Provides customer services for record and archive centers
  ii.   make suggestion to record and archival center users about new materials to checkout
  iii. Helps record and archive center users to checkout materials
  iv.   Keep a budget to repair, replace or get new reading materials
  v.   Ordering books, journal and others resources
  vi.   Advising users on materials for their information need
  vii. Making sure that all users can access the information materials
  viii. Responding to questions from students, staff and other library users

Information is a stimulus that has meaning in some context for its receiver. When information is entered into and stored in a computer, it is generally referred to as data. Information can be seen as the anomalous state of mind. An information is the most essential and vital elements in the life of human being as well as activities of our day to day.

Below are some of the effective services that record officers make sure is maintained:

  i.   Record officers must make sure that information come from a reliable sources
  ii.   Record officers should make sure that information cannot be partial or have details missing
  iii. Record officers must make sure that a mechanism be in place to ensure that new data does not contradict existing data
  iv.   Record officers must make sure information are distinctive and they add value to database
  v.   Record officers must make sure information in a database is timely and up to date

Significance of Information Sharing in FMCs

Generally, information sharing is geared towards satisfying the information needs amongst FMCs. It is through sharing that these information or networks of Information are made available to people who desire them. Sharing therefore makes information available at low cost and consequently reduces frustration of information to users. Malhot (2019) avers that sharing breaks clown institutional bail since librarians Identify libraries that have what they need and obtain these resources from them. One of the significant aspects that needs attention is that each participating library of the FMC should have a clear cut policy as regards the type of resources it would be in a position to share with other member libraries. In other words, the library will have some books and journals which are very much used by its own clientele and cannot be lend out of the premises: Such documents do not fall under the purview of resources sharing. Therefore, for effective information sharing among libraries, it is important to reach an agreement on some of the under mentioned issues. Resources and services barrowed out either by libraries in partnership programs could be online transaction or

by transporting physical materials and services to another library through courier or speed-post, etc. for the purpose of benefitting the goal of these activities (Agboola and Bamigboye, 2020).

Information needs to be shared among people or communities or a nation at large in order to cut off information gap. The reasons for information sharing are to bridge the gap of communication when it comes to information need. Blakes, (2021), stated that "better resources and service, rising costs of resources, inadequate allocation for collections development, expensive foreign document delivery services and the ability of information are seen as important reasons for developing partnership, inter-library loan or information sharing activities in Nigerian FMCs North West zone".

Below are some of the basic reasons of sharing information among individuals and organizations;
a. Collaboration and building of a collective knowledge between organizations
b. To find better ways of doing things
c. Building a community full of learning culture
d. Creating a better customer experience
e. Connecting remote employees to information
f. Retaining of information

Methods of Information Sharing Practice in FMCs
Information is very vital in the day-to-day activities of individuals and organizations in order to satisfy the information needs of organization, the following six(6) ways to share information among organizations are listed:
i. To consolidate information in one platform
ii. To encourage the use of the platform
iii. To encourages questions during meetings
iv. To empower knowledge sharing
v. Training people on how to communicate
vi. To encourage transparence

Information can be shared in North West zone of Nigerian Federal Medical Centers through the following ways:
a. **Partnership:** This is the process by which two or more organizations reach a consensus to share common ideas or information. Therefore, by practicing partnership, the Federal Medical Centers can meet the information needs of their clientele irrespective of their background or what they need.

b. **Gift and Exchange of Resources and Services**: In the words of Blakes (2019), "the concept of inter library loans exists among institutions, organizations, research and special libraries in the country inform of gift and exchange of books and other resources as well as services are carried out formally and informally among libraries for a period of time". Also Walden (2021), opined that In modern resource sharing activities, a group of libraries pooled their resources and services together to acquire, process, store, preserve, and

disseminate these resources and services for the benefit of all members through the resources sharing or library co-operation ventures.

c. **Collection development/Co-operative acquisition**: The process of planning and building a useful and balanced collection of library materials over a period of years, based on an ongoing assessment of the information needs of the library's clientele. It includes the formulation of selection criteria, planning for resource sharing, and replacement of lost and damaged items, as well as routine selection and reselection decisions.

d. **Interlibrary loan**: This is a form of resource sharing that depends on the maintenance of union catalogues. The Inter-library loan system is a process of lending out resources and services among libraries. "Lending and borrowing between and among libraries are investments that pay off and it is essential to formulate guidelines that can facilitate information sharing activities" (Swift and Hwang, 2019). Resources and services barrowed out either by libraries in partnership programs could be online transaction or by transporting physical materials and services to another library through courier or speed-post, etc. for the purpose of benefitting the goal of these activities (Agboola and Bamigboye, 2020).

ICTs Used for Information Sharing In FMCs

ICT is an extensional term for IT that stresses the role of unified communication and integration of telecommunication (telephone line and wireless signals) and computers as well as necessary enterprises software, middleware, storage and audiovisual, that enables users to access, store, transmit, understand, and manipulate information. ICT is also used to refer to the convergence of audio visual and telephone networks with computer network through a single cabling or link system. According to Curtain (2022) "web is a series of interconnected documents on computer sites or websites". Encyclopedia of computer science defined it as "information and communication technology (ICT) is an imprecise term frequently fundamental rob rod areas of technology and associated with the use of computer and communication". Oladapo (2022) observes that in digital sharing of resources, the use of computers and telecommunications facilitate the exchange of information resources. This means that the emergence of computers through the internet and online services has brought an improvement in the sharing of resources.

The advent of information and communication technology, which characterizes the digital age, has brought a turnaround in information sharing. Below are some of the ICTs that are used to share information: Internet, Computer, Telephone, Radio, Television, CD-ROM database, and Email. There are also fast and reliable media platforms for sharing information that requires the use of internet network and electricity for information that can be used to meet the needs of their clientele, some are:
Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and Telegram

Challenges Associated With Information Sharing In FMCs

Challenges in this context also can be viewed as a hindrance that may halt the proper working of records and archived resources. When there is a problem, the users can find it difficult to access the resources for their information. Mechanical, biological and chemical deterioration can also affect the collections such as rodent, pest and insect, improper handling of papers as well as direct sunlight, mutilation, dust and other chemical activities. Shuva (2019) put forward some challenges associated with resource sharing activities in libraries; lack of awareness and understanding, poor budgeting implementation, lack of technological compatibility and security, fear from local identity, type of agreements, lack of complete library automation and poor consortia as a legal entity. Ikem and Nwalo (2020) also identified gross under funding as one of the challenges of resource sharing. Challenges that are associated with the records and archive management centers are as follows:

i.   Frequent power failure; Lack of ICT skills by the staff (record officer); Lack of ICT skills by the users (staff and clientele); Inability to organize seminars in order to keep users aware of a new facilities; Problem of budget from federal to bottom level; and Lack of user education program
ii.   Information sensitivity
iii. Organization of information in a presentable, sharable, and useful way
iv.   Accidental disclosure of confidential or personal information
v.   Deliberate disclosure of information by a bad actor
vi.   Violation of intellectual property right and other interest
vii. Loss of control over information
viii. Cost of sharing information
ix.   Misuse of information or unauthorized purpose

Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance of effective information sharing practices among FMCs in general and FMCs in North West Zone of Nigeria in particular, it appears that the traditionally, printed information resources are still in use. Many researchers who have conducted research in the recent times have attempted to focus on the advantages and important of information sharing practices but none has been conducted in FMCs in North West Zone of Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated effectiveness of Information Sharing among Record Officers in Federal Medical Centers in North West Zone of Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

i.   To identify the availability of policies/guidelines for sharing information in FMCs in North West Zone of Nigeria.
ii. To find out the types of information sharing activities practiced among FMCs in North West Zone.
iii. To identify the ICTs used for information sharing among FMCs in North West Zone.
iv. To identify the challenges facing information sharing among FMCs in North West Zone

Methodology

This study adopts survey research design. The population of the study consists of all the record officers in federal medical centers in North West zone of Nigeria. This study adopts quantitative research method using interview. Data were collected from the record officers of the four (4) Federal medical centers that are situated in the North West zone of Nigeria (FMC Birnin Kudu in Jigawa State, FMC Gusau in Zamfara State, FMC Kebbi in Kebbi State and FMC Katsina in Katsina State.

Results and Discussions

Table one (1): Coding of FMCs of the various state:

S/N	Federal Medical Centers	Code	Respondents
1	FMC Birnin Kudu (Jigawa State)	001	Record officer
2	FMC Gusau (Zamfara State)	002	Record officer
3	FMC Kebbi (Kebbi State)	003	Record officer
4	FMC Katsina (Katsina state)	004	Record officer

The above table shows the coding and respondents in various states that has FMCs which includes the following 001 which is FMC Birnin Kudu in Jigawa State, 002 which is FMC Gusau in Zamfara State, 003 which is FMC Kebbi in Kebbi State and 004which is FMC Katsina in Katsina State.

Research question 1: What are the policy/guidelines for information sharing among Federal Medical Centers in North West Zone?

Table two (2): Policy/guidelines guiding the practice of information sharing activities

Respondent were asked to provide the information on the availability of a policy/guidelines for information sharing activities. According to C001-C004 respondents in the interview, they pointed out that "*there is no policy for information sharing activities but they engage in the activities in an informal agreement*". The above table shows that all the 4 respondents mentioned that there are no policy/guidelines for information sharing among the FMCs but the only share information through formal agreements.

Research question 2: What types of information sharing activities are practices among FMCs of North West Zone?
Table three (3): types of information sharing practice among FMCs

The data collected through the interview from the respondent on the types of information sharing practiced in FMCs was presented in the table below:

Table three (3): Types of information sharing practice among FMCs

FMCs	Cooperative acquisition	Interlibrary loan	Gift and exchange	Partnership
FMC Birnin Kudu (001)	X	✓	X	X
FMC Gusau (002)	X	✓	X	X
FMC Kebbi (003)	X	✓	X	X
FMC Katsina (004)	X	✓	X	X

The above table indicates the result from the respondents of the interview from record officers of FMCs in scope. The result shows that only to some extent that information is been sharing among them. From the participant C001-C004, it shows that only inter-library loan is applicable to them in sharing the information among them.

Research question 3: What are the ICTs facilities used in information sharing among FMCs in North West Zone?
Table four: types of ICT facilities used in information sharing among FMCs
The respondents had indicated "YES" that ICTs facilities are readily available for the activities of getting information to both staff and patrons. The table below shows the ICTs available:

Table four: Types of ICTs facilities used in information sharing among FMCs

FMCs	Internet	Computer	Telephone	Radio	Email	CD-ROM	Television	Social Networking Site
FMC Birnin Kudu (001)	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X
FMC Gusau (002)	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X
FMC Kebbi (003)	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓
FMC Katsina (004)	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X

The above table shows the interview result held with the respondents C001-C004. The result shows that all the record officers were provided with ICTs facilities in their various records office or rather a library. The C001, C002, C003, C004 indicates that they used internet, computer and telephone. But according to C001-C004 the radio, CD-ROM and Email are not often use to share information. Television and social networking site are to some extent also available and used to share information among record officers.

Research question 4: What are the challenges associated with information sharing among Federal Medical Centers in North West Zone?
Challenges associated with information sharing among FMCs record officers
The respondents were asked to state the challenges associated with the information sharing among records officers of FMCs in North West zone of Nigeria. Below is the result from the respondents:
C001: The respondent mentioned that there are many problems associated with information sharing especially the problem of power failure and lack of ICT skills of both the staff and patrons.
C002: The opinion of this respondent also indicated that power problem is in place to disrupt the activities of information sharing in Nigeria; also recruiting of unqualified staff that can serves as record officers,
C003: From the interview result this respondent has clearly stated that there was a problem of policies on information sharing and lack of good budget allocation to the sector of records and archival system in the nation.

C004: The respondent indicated that negligence of government plays a role in the area of information sharing among record officers under the scope of this study.

Summary of findings

    i.   The study shows that there is no policy for information sharing among FMCs of the North West Zone and Nigeria at large

    ii.   The study revealed that the only information sharing practice in FMCs of the North West Zone was interlibrary loan.

    iii.   The ICT most popularly used for sharing information in FMCs are Internet, Computer and Television.

    iv.   The summation of the problem faced by information sharing in FMCs of the North West Zone of Nigeria are; irregular power supply, network problem and poor ICT skills

Conclusion and Recommendations

    It can be concluded that record officers of the FMCs engage in information sharing practices. Also, there is no policy governing the information sharing among FMCs, there is also the problem of staff, budget system and power failure and network problem. Poor ICTs skills of staff of FMCs is also another major problem to information sharing in FMCs of the North West Zone and Nigeria at large. Resulting from the finding the   following recommendation are made:

1. Policy for information sharing among FMCs should be formulated and implemented
2. Information sharing practices such as cooperative acquisition, gift and exchange should be encourage among FMCs
3. The use of social networking for information sharing should be encourage among FMCs
4. Strategy should be put in place to ensure that staff of FMCs acquire ICT skill to enable them share information effectively

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