AN ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIES FOR POSITIVE LIBRARY USER EXPERIENCES: EMPIRICAL STUDY OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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ABSTRACT

The chief focus of this study was to assess the strategies for positive library user experiences in Akwa Ibom State. A descriptive survey approach was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study consisted of all librarians in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. A stratified sampling technique was used to select 30 librarians from the University of Uyo, 20 librarians from Akwa Ibom State University, 10 librarians from Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, and 5 librarians from the College of Education. This gave a total of 65 respondents, which made up the sample size used for the study. The instrument used in this study for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Positive Library User Experience Questionnaire (PLUEQ)." Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert for measurement and evaluation to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.80, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study revealed that the major problem facing academic libraries in Nigeria is inadequate funding. The issue of poor funding has made academic libraries unable to acquire new foreign and indigenous materials (books and journals) that would have helped propel the efficiency and effectiveness of their roles. It was concluded in the study that if the perceived quality of the library resources is redesigned, and the agenda of ethnographic embraced to the fullest, lectures and seminars organized appropriately, the academic library stand ground of quality service. One of the recommendations made, among others, was that the library needs to identify priorities among the demands of users and measure service performance in areas that the users perceive as important.

KEYWORDS: Academic library, Library Users, Positive Experience and Akwa Ibom State.

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Introduction

It's been claimed that the heart of educational institutions is the library. Academic libraries are helpful for collecting, maintaining, and lending out books and other reading materials pertinent to teachers' and students' requirements and interests. They pique staff members' and students' interest and curiosity by demonstrating the best ways to utilize the resources available for their study. They promote self-study and develop a sense of value in the customers. School libraries, like public libraries, contain books, movies, recordings of sound, journals, and digital media, according to LPU (2012). These things serve not only to educate, amuse, and entertain everyone associated with the school but also to improve and broaden the curriculum. It is now debatable if the majority of colleges are effectively teaching the populace. In order to provide a space that is conducive to learning, academic libraries' function has become a key concern.

Library services nowadays are highly complicated. The user experience (UX) of our environments, services, and products has likely been ignored for a multitude of reasons up until this point. The days when librarians merely worried about how to fill their shelves and get it to circulate properly among their users are long gone. We now struggle to give excellent teaching and learning while also achieving the ideal mix between print and electronic media, servicing both local and remote users in an efficient manner, and actively embracing technology and research data. Users of today are highly sophisticated. Their methods of gathering information have evolved, and they interact with and see our services in quite new ways. NSS (2015) asserts that by implementing user experience research methodologies (UX), it is possible to identify the type of users found in libraries: those that behave in ways that are difficult to comprehend and even appear annoying. This is consistent with Christopher Millson-Martula and Vanaja Menon's (2015) assertion that an academic library's capacity to modify its offerings in order to meet user requirements is essential to the organization's long-term viability. To advertise library services and resources, a number of strategies have been employed. This study is being conducted to evaluate the potential strategies for enhancing the user experience in academic libraries, and it is based on this concept.

Statement of Problem

Since academic libraries are a type of organization that supports education, career progress, and community accomplishment, they are crucial to the growth of a country. Nigeria, however, cannot be seen as a country that values reading because of the condition of its libraries, which are neither attractively presented or set up to draw in visitors. Inadequate financing is one of the biggest issues affecting academic libraries in Nigeria. Higher education institutions, which get direct funding from the federal or state governments, are the owners of the majority of academic libraries in the nation. However, it is unfortunate to note

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that most institutions often are unable to allocate the 10% that is typically set aside for libraries since most colleges continue to experience budget cuts as a result of poor leadership, poor economic policies, and the horrible status of the economy. Academic libraries have also been prevented from acquiring new international and domestic resources (books and journals) that would have boosted their positions' efficiency and effectiveness due to a lack of financing.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were formulated to guide the study.

1. To examine the level of quality libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

2. To find out the strategies to enhance positive library user experience in Akwa Ibom State

3. To determine the challenges of academic library in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered.

1. What is the level of quality libraries in Akwa Ibom State?

2. What are the strategies to enhance positive library user experience in Akwa Ibom State?

3. What are the challenges of academic library in Nigeria?

Conceptual Review

Concept of Library

Information has traditionally been stored in libraries. A library is classified as a structure or space that houses a collection of books; it is the ideal location for learning through printed materials and digital media. Books, journals, daily newspapers, compositions, films, maps, prints, archives, microforms, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, Blu-ray disks, e-books, book recordings, and databases can all be found in a library's collection. Libraries might have a few book racks or a few million items. The library plays a crucial part in developing learning abilities. According to LISBDNETWORK (2014), a library is defined as "a place in which books, manuscripts, musical scores, or other literary and artistic material are kept, for use but not for sale," and as an institution for the custody or administration of such a collection. Typically, paraprofessional employees (sometimes referred to as library technicians) and support personnel work in libraries alongside professionally trained librarians. In addition, a library is a collection of materials in various formats that are (1) arranged by information specialists or other experts who (2) offer practical physical, digital, bibliographic,

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or intellectual access and (3) offer targeted services and programs (4) with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences (5) and the objective of promoting individual learning and advancing society as a whole.

According to Olanlokun & Salisu (2019), libraries play a vital part in the development of nations since they have evolved into institutions that are reliant on the achievement, organization, conservation, stockpiling, recovery, and distribution of data in any form. Libraries may be a real site, a virtual area, or both, and they may offer physical or digital access to material. Libraries frequently have quiet study spaces, gathering spaces for group work and collaboration, and may include public access points for its electronic resources, such computers and Internet access. The type of library will determine its clientele and services provided; for instance, consumers of a public library will have different demands than those of a special library or an academic library. Libraries may serve as community centers where individuals participate in lifelong learning and receive programming.

Concept of Academic Library

According to Akporhonor (2015), academic libraries are those that are affiliated with tertiary institutions such universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, colleges of technology, and research institutes. In order to satisfy the requirements of their respective communities, which are made up of students, professors, and researchers, academic libraries are at the forefront of offering information services. Academic libraries are sometimes known as the "heart" or "nerve centers" of higher education institutions since they serve as the hub for all academic activity. Students, lecturers, and seasoned researchers can all receive bibliographic training from academic libraries and aid with their research. The majority of the funding for academic libraries in Nigeria comes from the federal and state governments. Yetunde (2018) noted that the founder and the board of trustees often decide the university library's part of the budget, which is frequently insufficient, in the majority of private institutions in Nigeria.

According to Onyegunle (2013), academic libraries are information hubs created to support the parent institutions' missions to produce knowledge, arm individuals with knowledge to serve society, and enhance human welfare. These libraries assist the curriculum of the school as well as the research of university staff and students, which are two complimentary functions. According to Okiy (2015), academic libraries are now expected to provide users with a variety of information and communication technologies and e-resources required for quickly retrieving information from both local and remote databases, as well as creating a need for library collaboration and consortium initiatives. Almost every tertiary institution in Nigeria owns at least one academic library. The importance of an academic library can't be overruled in the sense that it provides

information to students, lecturers, and researchers. This in turn enhances the teaching and learning process as well as the ability of researchers within the institution to carry out reputable research. These are some of the reasons why academic libraries are sometimes referred to as the nerve centers of tertiary institutions.

Library Qualities

Owoeye and Yara (2011) stated that the chief purpose of a school library is to make available to the students all books, periodicals, and other reproduced materials that are of interest and value but are not provided as basic or supplementary textbooks. This is in sequence with School Library Works (2016), which states that the purpose of the school library includes the provision of a flexible space with a wide and inclusive range of resources to support learning and teaching throughout the school, the development of a culture that promotes wider reading and motivates readers and learners for life, and the provision of a place for collaborative learning, creativity, and for developing independent research and information literacy skills. Due to rapid technological (ICT) change and impact on libraries, the libraries are now heavily dependent on users' satisfaction of their services, meaning that how the users are more satisfied with the resources and services provided by the respective libraries has become a matter of significance for the survival of libraries. When a library service meets the needs of its users, it is considered of high quality. When a library provides the right information to the right user at the right time and in the required form, it may be considered that the library is giving quality service to its users (Sahu, 2016). Quality refers to the degree of goodness in accordance with the specifications and standards. Hornby (2017) defined "quality" as "the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind or the degree of excellence of something." Therefore, in general, it can be said that quality is a degree of excellence towards the resources and services provided to the users, and similarly, the users can get the maximum satisfaction and feel delighted.

Quality is an attribute, a characteristic, a trait, or an excellence, the possession of which bestows a sense of superiority on a thing, a person, or an idea. Although the concept of service quality is not new, measuring service quality as a management technique has gained much importance over the last few decades in most service organizations, especially in libraries and information centers (LibQUAL, 2018). If the library provides quality services, users may be drawn to it, become regular users, and spread the word to others about the library's services. Thus, quality programs will increase the library's efficiency and improve the library's or institution's image in the academic arena. In a study of Sri Lankan libraries, Nawarathne & Singh (2013) found that the quality of services provided by the academic libraries in Sri Lanka was unsatisfactory, and respondents specifically showed their dissatisfaction with the check-out system of the library materials, convenient service hours, Internet facilities for library

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users, and availability of information in the online catalogue, as users rated these services very poor. In the University of Girne American Library at Cyprus, Kitana and Serdar (2014) found that the overall service quality in the library was simply good and met the respondent's satisfaction and needs, but the library's electronic services such as the computers, printers, and scanners were excellent. Nawarathne (2015) observed that the response received from the students of Sri Lankan academic libraries on overall satisfaction was very close to the value received from academics on overall user satisfaction and that academic staff focused more attention on overall service quality and user satisfaction because of their long experience.

Strategies for Positive Library User Experience

Information technologies change rapidly. With evolving technological innovations and the variety and abundance of information that is becoming available to information users, competitive pressures will continue to intensify for academic libraries. Information products and services are in a multiplicity of formats in libraries. For libraries and information services to stay viable in the current climate, it is important that they adopt marketing strategies to help meet their mission, goals, and objectives. According to Enache (2018), marketing has long been associated with the sale of a product in order to make a profit, but it was extended to the non-profit sector, including libraries, in the 1960s. For libraries, marketing is about a set of activities including understanding client needs, determining market niches, identifying products and services, building client relationships, and creating a "marketing mix" (Potter, 2012). Unlike traditional marketing, which is organization-focused and for a specific product, libraries and information agencies are client-focused organizations focusing on clients and meeting their needs, and they need to adopt service marketing (Welch, 2006).

In addition, each year, new students enter the academic environment with varying library usage and information-gathering skills. Student perceptions and expectations of service from academic libraries also vary, making it imperative to better understand and define specific student needs and to provide the type and level of service that meets them. Also, users' needs may change imperceptibly over time, and libraries must constantly take such changes into account. Thus, Christopher Millson-Martula and Vanaja Menon (2015) asserted that one element of high-quality service is the incorporation of users' personal needs and expectations into the development of programs and services. According to them, the continued success of a service organization such as an academic library depends on the organization's ability to adjust its products and services to correspond to user needs. A variety of techniques have been used to promote library services and resources.

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i. *Redesigning the Perceived Quality of the Library's Resources:* Prompt responsiveness is identified as an important element of service quality in libraries. It is defined as the willingness of the staff to be helpful and to provide prompt services. At academic libraries, users expect that the library staff will attend to their needs quickly and efficiently. Promptness, therefore, can be critical to users' perceptions of responsiveness.

ii. *Embracing an Ethnographic Agenda*: The decision to incorporate ethnography and other qualitative methodologies into the work of libraries can have a transformative effect on institutional practices. Adopting such an approach signals the conviction that institutional spaces should be not just insiders (Stommel, 2014). Qualitative approaches to understanding library users provide opportunities, space, opportunities for reflection, possibilities, and, perhaps most importantly, persuasion.

iii. *Organizing Lectures and Seminars*: Seminars are of immense benefits to enlighten the users of the parent institution and other worthy beneficiaries on how to effectively use the library. These in return provides a suitable environment that spurs reading.

iv. *Create opportunities for discovery:* Discovery is about helping users find more of the riches that are in your library. As part of this process, you expand people's perceptions of your library. Attractive displays and presentations lead users to discover new books and be inspired to explore other genres and topics.

Challenges of Academic Libraries in Nigeria

Libraries face numerous challenges, such as restricted funding and increasing user expectations, as they identify, develop, deliver, and monitor service offerings that are superior to their competitors. However, these challenges offer opportunities to provide better services for users by redefining customer relationships through the use of marketing strategies to build and strengthen ongoing relationships with customers (Rowley, 2003). There are many problems facing the nation's academic libraries, and this has adversely affected the nation's growth and development. Some major problems that have affected the efficiency and smooth operation of academic libraries in Nigeria are as follows:

i. *Poor Funding:* One of the major problems facing academic libraries in Nigeria is inadequate funding. Most academic libraries in the country are owned by higher education institutions, which are directly funded by the federal or state governments. According to InfoGuide Nigeria (2022), most university libraries are allocated 10% of the recurrent annual budget of their parent institutions. In most cases, this has proven to be inadequate, as it is usually not possible to equip the libraries to the highest possible standards. The issue of poor funding has also made academic libraries unable to acquire new foreign and indigenous materials (books and

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journals) that would have helped propel the efficiency and effectiveness of their roles.

ii. *Poor Infrastructure:* Most academic libraries in Nigeria lack proper infrastructure and facilities to enable them to perfectly carry out their functions. Most of the infrastructure in the library is old and on the verge of dilapidation and total collapse. Some of the academic libraries in the country also lack up-to-date library materials and insufficient storage devices for audio or visual collections, which has made the public lose interest in the library.

iii. *Absence of Digital and E-Libraries:* Most academic libraries in Nigeria have not fully embraced modern technology and ICT. Most academic libraries lack the skill, manpower, and capital needed to operate a digital library.

iv. *Lack of Properly Trained Staffs:* The absence of properly trained staff is also a great source of problem for the libraries, as they are poorly trained on handling library materials and also oblivious to new trends and updates in the library and information sector. There is also a lack of sufficient professional librarians as the academic libraries have failed to effectively train students in library science. Today, the few graduates of library science would rather hunt for jobs in other sectors due to the poor state of the academic libraries in Nigeria (InfoGuide Nigeria 2022).

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study consisted of all librarians in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. A stratified sampling technique was used to select 30 librarians at the University of Uyo, 20 librarians at Akwa Ibom State University, 10 librarians at Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, and 5 librarians at the College of Education. This gave a total of 65 respondents, which made up the sample size used for the study. The instrument used in this study for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Positive Library User Experience Questionnaire (PLUEQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert for measurement and evaluation to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.80, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Result and Data Analysis

Research Questions One: The research question sought to find out the level of quality libraries in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 1).

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Table 1: Percentage analysis of the level of quality libraries in Akwa Ibom State

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH EXTENT	14	21.54
HIGH EXTENT	37	56.92**
LOW EXTENT	8	12.31
VERY LOW EXTENT	6	9.23*
TOTAL	65	100%

** The highest percentage frequency
* The least percentage frequency
SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the level of quality libraries in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (56.92%) of the respondents affirmed that the level of quality libraries in Akwa Ibom State is high, while the least percentage (9.23%) of the respondents stated that level of quality libraries in Akwa Ibom State is very low. This means that there is a high extent of quality libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions Two: The research question sought to find out the strategies to enhance positive library user experience in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

Table 2: Percentage analysis of the strategies to enhance positive library user experience in Akwa Ibom State

STRATEGIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Redesigning the Quality of Resources	24	36.92**
Embracing an Ethnographic Agenda	14	21.54
Organizing Lectures and Seminars	16	24.62
Creating Opportunities for Discovery	11	16.92*
TOTAL	65	100%

** The highest percentage frequency
* The least percentage frequency
SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the strategies to enhance positive library user experience in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (36.92%) of the respondents affirmed that to enhance positive library user experience in Akwa Ibom State there must be redesigning of the perceived quality of the library resources, while the least percentage (16.92%) of the respondents stated that by creating opportunities for discovery is the strategy enhancement of positive library user experience in Akwa Ibom State is ensured. That is to say, if the

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library quality of resources is redesigned, to suit to the user needs, the library will get to high standard.

Research Questions Three: The research question sought to find out the challenges of academic library in Nigeria. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 3).

Table 3: Percentage analysis of the challenges of academic library in Nigeria

CHALLENGES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Poor Funding	30	46.15**
Poor Infrastructure	14	21.54
Absence of Digital and E-Lib	16	24.62
Lack of Properly Trained Staff	5	7.69*
TOTAL	65	100%

** The highest percentage frequency
* The least percentage frequency
SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 3 presents the percentage analysis of the challenges of academic library in Nigeria. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (46.15%) of the respondents affirmed that the challenges of academic library in Nigeria is poor funding, while the least percentage (7.69%) of the respondents stated that the challenges of academic library in Nigeria is lack of properly trained staff. This means that the academic library depends on adequate funding to equip the library and to carry out various task. Therefore, if not adequately funded by the government, the academic library suffers low quality.

Conclusion

The importance of an academic library can't be overruled in the sense that it provides information to students, lecturers, and researchers. When a library provides the right information to the right user at the right time and in the required form, it may be considered that the library is providing quality service to its users. The major problem facing academic libraries in Nigeria is inadequate funding. The issue of poor funding has made academic libraries unable to acquire new foreign and indigenous materials (books and journals) that would have helped propel the efficiency and effectiveness of their roles. In this regard, it is inevitable that the continued success of a service organization such as an academic library depends on the organization's ability to adjust its products and services to correspond to user needs. As a result, if the perceived quality of library resources is redesigned, the ethnographic agenda is fully embraced, and lectures and seminars are appropriately organized, the academic library will stand on the ground of quality service.

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Recommendations

1. The library needs to identify priorities among the demands of users and measure service performance in areas that the users perceive as important.

2. Libraries should be recognized as places of wisdom and symbols of intellect, and all the library professionals should come together and form associations of administrative training institutes (ATIs) so that collectively, better user services could be given to the ATI trainees and trainers.

3. Libraries should be established in all secondary schools and tertiary institutions, and they should be well-equipped and funded by the government and authorities concerned with quality services.

4. Students should have full access to materials in order to promote effective utilization of the resources.

5. All stakeholders should embrace the digital revolution and ensure ICT facilities are provided in the academic libraries.

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