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INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND STORAGE SKILLS AND STAFF PERFORMANCE IN POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-EAST AND SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated information management skills, information storage skills, and staff performance in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Two research questions guided the study and were analysed using mean scores. From a population of 543 library staff, a sample of 226 respondents was selected using proportionate and simple random sampling techniques. A self-constructed and validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Out of 226 copies distributed, 178 were returned, representing a response rate of 78.8%. Findings revealed that information management skills have a significant relationship with staff performance. Similarly, information storage skills were found to significantly relate to staff performance. The study concludes that both information management and storage competencies enhance staff efficiency and effective service delivery. It therefore recommends that polytechnic management should strengthen staff capacity through provision of adequate ICT facilities, including computers, internet access, and e-library systems. Furthermore, institutions should prioritize information storage security through structured policies and independent certification mechanisms to ensure data protection and system integrity.

Keywords: Information Management Skills, Information Storage Skills, Library Staff, Staff Performance, Polytechnic Libraries

1.1 Introduction

Information can be understood as the collective knowledge accumulated by humans across all subjects, formats, and sources, which enables individuals to make informed decisions. It is central to human activity and essential for survival, playing a pivotal role in research and societal development (Oziri, Unegbu & Ndulaka, 2023). According to Unegbu, Opara & Emuchay (2023), information may be viewed as answers to

questions beginning with who, what, where, when, and how many, encompassing knowledge about a subject, an individual, or related factors.

Information management practices, as defined by Sebina (2016), involve handling information in ways that facilitate efficient access, understanding, and appropriate dissemination to the right users. This requires qualified librarians and information professionals to not only collect, preserve, and

promote national information resources but also to ensure timely access to global information for relevant segments of society. Effective information management is less about the volume of information available and more about timely dissemination to appropriate users. It encompasses four main components: people (creators and users of information), policies and processes (rules and procedures governing access and usage), technology (tools for storing and managing information, such as computers and filing systems), and the information itself.

According to Otiike (2016) and Tungare (2007), information management as the systematic planning, budgeting, controlling, and utilization of information resources, involving infrastructure creation, staff recruitment, and adoption of technologies to ensure accurate, durable, and retrievable information. Within institutions like polytechnic libraries, information management entails efficiently treating, maintaining, retrieving, and delivering the right information, at the right time, in the right format, and at minimal cost to support decision-making (Kalusopa & Ngulube, 2012). Good information management relies on consistent and effective practices. In this study, information management practices are the activities, processes, and tools used by polytechnic libraries to ensure regular access, longevity, and security of information, delivering the right content to users at the right time in a user-friendly format. This research focuses on two key variables: staff information management skills and information storage skills.

Information management skill refers to the competency to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively, which is increasingly important in a digital and ICT-driven environment (Aniebo, 2017). It includes recognizing when information is needed, identifying sources, evaluating relevance and accuracy, and applying it for decision-making.

Information storage skill involves protecting information from unauthorized access, modification, disclosure, or destruction. Jackson (2012) adds that it encompasses controlling access so that only authorized users can retrieve sensitive data.

Staff performance is the measurable outcome of an employee's actions in achieving organizational goals (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2016). High performance contributes significantly to organizational success (Dizgah, Chegini & Bisokhan, 2015), and positive workplace attitudes enhance commitment and productivity (Judge, Bono, Thoreson & Patton, 2016; Susanty, Miradipta & Jie, 2016). A library staff member provides access to information and assists users in research or technical processes (Reitz, 2009). Polytechnic libraries serve as central academic hubs, supporting teaching, learning, research, and community service (Adepoju, 2016; Onwubiko & Uzoigwe, 2004). The management of information in these libraries has evolved from manual practices to technology-driven systems, significantly improving efficiency. This study therefore examines the relationship between information management skills, information storage skills and staff performance in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

This research is set out to provide answers to the following research questions.

- i. How does information management skills affect staff performance in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria?
- ii. In what way does information storage skills affect staff performance in polytechnic libraries?

2.1 Literature Review

In today's information-driven society, library staff are expected to efficiently use library resources and tools to retrieve relevant

information and conduct research independently. Information management skills involve recognizing when information is needed, knowing where to locate it, and understanding how to evaluate, use, and ethically communicate it (CILIP, 2012). Acquiring these skills requires understanding the need for information, the resources available, search strategies, evaluation of results, effective use, communication of findings, and management of the obtained information (Eisenberg, Lowe & Spitzer, 2016).

An intellectual framework for information literacy includes identifying and assessing the nature and extent of required information, accessing it efficiently, evaluating its sources critically, integrating it into existing knowledge, using it effectively for a purpose, and understanding related legal, social, and ethical issues (Wischusen, 2005). Similarly, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2005) defines information literacy as the set of competencies that enable individuals to recognize the need for information and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use it. Information literacy is foundational for lifelong learning, applicable across disciplines, educational levels, and learning environments.

Consequently, information management skills require individuals to identify when information is needed, locate and evaluate sources, and communicate findings effectively to address problems or make decisions. Whether the information originates from the Internet, databases, books, or other sources, a person with strong information management skills can critically analyse, understand, and utilize it (Usman, 2015; Bruce, 2016; Etim, 2007). Achieving full information literacy requires simultaneous possession of curiosity, analytical skills to formulate questions, research methodologies, and the ability to

critically evaluate results. Users must also have the capability to search efficiently in complex information environments and access the information they need. Teaching information management skills is therefore crucial. An information literate individual should recognize the value of accurate information for decision-making, identify potential sources, develop search strategies, access both traditional and digital sources, evaluate and organize information, integrate it into existing knowledge, and apply it for critical thinking and problem-solving (Unagha, 2011; Crawford, 2016; Eisenberg, Lowe & Spitzer, 2016).

Information literate users are independent and competent learners who understand their information needs, engage actively with ideas, demonstrate confidence in problem-solving, distinguish relevant information, and effectively use technology to access and communicate information. They can work flexibly in situations with multiple or no clear answers while maintaining high standards in producing quality work (Alison, 2007). Empirical studies indicate the importance of information management skills for effective use of resources. Alison (2007) examined how these skills influenced the utilization of electronic resources in selected Ugandan academic institutions. The study revealed that despite the availability of resources, actual usage was limited due to lack of awareness and insufficient skills, highlighting the need for information literacy training. Similarly, Issa, Amusan and Daura (2009) found that although University of Ilorin provided e-resources, many students lacked the necessary skills to use them, indicating weak integration of information management training.

Amalahu & Laoye (2009) observed that students in Nigerian higher education often lack proficiency in using computers and library catalogues, recommending collaboration between librarians and faculty to integrate

information management skills into curricula. Dadzie (2009) identified challenges in Ghanaian universities, such as insufficient collaboration, large class sizes, inadequate staff, and cumbersome program delivery, which hinder effective implementation of information management skill programs. Maintaouthong, Tuamsuk & Tachamanee (2012) found that university libraries in Bangkok played key roles in implementing information management skill programs, providing resources, ICT facilities, and assessment tools to enhance student competency. Emwanta & Nwalo (2013) confirmed that information management skills and subject background influenced undergraduate students' use of electronic resources in southwestern Nigerian universities.

Studies on academic staff also highlight the impact of information management skills. Okiki & Mabawonku (2013) found that academic staff in Nigerian federal universities acquired skills primarily through workshops, self-learning, peer assistance, and departmental training, with research productivity higher in journal publications and technical reports. Similarly, Okon, Etuk & Akpan (2014) found a significant relationship between information management skills and students' use of information, emphasizing the need for adequate library facilities. Effective information storage is critical for protecting valuable information against unauthorized access. Spencer (2016) notes that while strong security measures protect organizational data, excessive controls can reduce staff performance. Uhegbu (2007) emphasizes risk management as essential for safeguarding information from threats, including cyberattacks, with risk assessment evaluating vulnerabilities and exposure. Information storage skills guarantee information security, defined by the United Nations (1986) as a condition enabling safe national

development.

Information storage involves measures to prevent unauthorized access, ensure data integrity, maintain availability, and protect confidentiality (Guralink, 2016; Imeremba, 2007; Allen, 2017). Systems must incorporate backup procedures, risk management, disaster recovery plans, access controls, encryption, and auditing to maintain security (Madu & Adeniran, 2005). According to the OECD (1992) cited in Orlowski (1996), key security principles include integrity, availability, and confidentiality, with accountability recently recognized as crucial for defining responsibility of information custodians (Kalusopa, 2015; Aina, Mutula & Tiamiyu, 2008). Research by Burns, Ferris & Liatsopoulos (2014) indicates that African countries face challenges in implementing effective information storage due to poor historical records management, lack of funding, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficiently trained staff. Esterhuizen, Schutte & Dutoit (2016) highlight that robust information storage frameworks can enhance innovation and organizational performance. However, no empirical studies have examined the relationship between information management skills, information storage skills, and staff performance in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South Nigeria, forming the gap this study addresses.

3.1 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, with a questionnaire used as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument, titled Information Management Skills, Information Storage Skills and Staff Performance (IMSISPSI), was administered to polytechnic library staff in the South-East and South-South zones of Nigeria. The South-East Nigeria is one of the six (6) geo-political zones in Nigeria comprising Abia State, Anambra State, Ebonyi State, Enugu State and Imo State.

The South-South zone comprises six states: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers. It is geographically bordered to the north by Kogi, Anambra, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, and Benue states, to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the east by the Republic of Cameroon, and to the west by Ondo State. The zone experiences both wet and dry seasons, with favorable temperatures, and is characterized by a network of rivers, streams, and creeks including the Niger, Imo, Qua Iboe, and Cross Rivers.

A total of 226 copies of the questionnaire were distributed among library staff in polytechnic libraries across both zones. Out of these, 178 questionnaires were returned and duly completed, resulting in a response rate of 78.8%, while 48 copies were not returned, giving a non-response rate of

21.2%. The returned questionnaires provided an adequate representation of the target population. The sample size of 226 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1969) formula for finite populations. To allocate the sample proportionately across institutions, the proportionate sampling method was applied following Uzoagulu's (1998) formula. The actual respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique, ensuring that each library staff member had an equal chance of being included in the study.

4.1 Result and Analysis

Research Question 1: How does information management skills affect staff performance in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Responses on the Information Management Skills and Staff Performance

S/N	Information Management Skills and Staff Performance	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
a.	I can search for information effectively using author, little, subject, keywords.	86	58	26	8	178	3.24	Significant
b.	I can formulate right keywords when searching for information.	90	72	9	7	178	3.37	Significant
c.	I can select correct search indexes to find information	72	62	33	11	178	3.15	Not Significant
d.	I can effectively select appropriate database.	63	68	25	22	178	3.00	Not Significant
e.	I recognize when to limit online information search by fields	71	65	24	18	178	3.06	Not Significant
	Significant Mean Value= 3.18							

Result on Table 1, indicate that at a significant mean value of 3.18, information management skills affect job performance of staff of polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria because the staff had the skill to search for effectively using author, little, subject, keywords as appropriate (X=3.24) and that the staff could formulate right keywords when searching for information

(X=3.37). Although, other information management skills such as correct selection of indexes (X=3.15), correct selection of appropriate database (X=3.00), recognition of when to limit online information search (X=3.06) relate to staff performance, they are considered insignificant relationship because their mean values were less than the significant mean values of 3.18.

Research Question 2 : In what way does information storage skills affect staff performance in polytechnic libraries?

Table 2: Mean Responses on the Information Storage Skills and Staff Performance

S/N	Information Storage Skills and Staff Performance	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
							$\bar{X}$	
a.	I use storage facility (whether manual or automated) for data and information protection	68	67	27	16	178	3.20	Significant
b.	I use security for effective information delivery	95	61	15	7	178	3.37	Significant
c.	I use security for information authenticity and confidentiality	76	67	13	22	178	3.10	Significant
d.	I do not use storage facility for effective information delivery	28	12	85	53	178	2.08	Not Significant
e.	I do not use storage facility for data and information protection	37	21	63	57	178	2.21	Not Significant
Significant Mean Value = 2.79								

As shown on Table 2 at a significant mean value ($X=2.79$), information storage skills relate to staff performance due to the fact that the staff could easily use storage facility (whether manual or automated) for data and information protection ($X=3.20$), using security apparatus for effective information ($X=3.37$) and also use security for information authenticity and confidentiality ($X=3.10$). Other storage facility such as, inability to use storage facility for effective information delivery ($X=2.08$) and inability to use storage facility for data and information protection ($X=2.21$) had relationship with the staff performance but were considered insignificant because their mean values were less than the significant mean value ($X=2.79$).

5.1 Discussion of Findings

Finding indicates that there is a significant relationship between information management skills and staff performance in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria. This relationship may have arisen because with information management skill, staff can effectively search for

information using author, title and other bibliographic details; staff could formulate right key words when searching for information (See Table 1). This implies that when staff are equipped with the right information management skills, their level of job performance will ultimately improve and enhanced. In addition, loss of essential data and information could be minimized and accuracy of services to users would be better executed

This finding agrees with the findings of Emwanta & Nwalo (2013) that information management skills and subject background influenced use of electronic information resources by the students in addition to enabling academic staff to acquire information management skills whenever they attend attendance to workshops/seminars, conferences and other training opportunities. The finding also agrees with the research outcome of Okon, Etuk & Akpan (2014) that there is a significant relationship between information management skills and use of information by students. This finding justifies the theory of Motivated Information

Management by W. A. Afrifi and J. I. Weiner in 2004 that individuals attempt to manage their uncertainty surrounding a particular communication issue using information management strategies.

Finding indicates that there is no significant relationship between information storage skills and staff performance in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South, Nigeria. This insignificant relationship may have arisen because information storage skills relate to staff performance because the staff could easily use storage facility (whether manual or automated) for data and information protection, using security apparatus for effective information and use and for information authenticity and confidentiality (See Table 2). This implies that with quality information storage skills, the library would be sure of proper preservation of its resources; retrieval of information resources would be better easier and faster; and the library would have achieved one of the laws of S. R Ranganathan that “save the time of the user”. This finding agrees with the findings of Burns, Ferris, & Liatsopoulos (2014), who emphatically indicates that the various poverty reduction strategies being implemented by the various African governments will be fruitless if they do not include some policies and strategies that address governments' records and information storage skills. The finding also agrees with the research outcome of Esterhuizen, Schutte & Dutoit (2016) that organizations can use information storage tools to create innovational capacity and growth, which may lead to high performance of organizations. This finding justifies the theory of Motivated Information Management by W. A. Afrifi and J. I. Weiner in 2004 that individuals attempt to manage their uncertainty surrounding a particular communication issue using information management strategies.

Conclusion

The study established that both information management skills and information storage skills significantly relate to staff performance in polytechnic libraries in South-East and South-South Nigeria. Staff who possess strong competencies in searching, organizing and securing information are better positioned to deliver efficient library services. Effective information management and secure storage systems are therefore essential components of modern polytechnic library administration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

- 1) Polytechnic management should strengthen staff information management competencies through continuous training and adequate provision of ICT infrastructure such as computers, network systems, reliable internet access and functional e-library platforms.
- 2) Information storage systems should be enhanced through structured security policies, periodic system audits, backup procedures, encryption mechanisms and independent certification of storage facilities to ensure data integrity and confidentiality.
- 3) Regular workshops and professional development programmes should be organized to keep staff updated on emerging information management and cybersecurity practices.

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