Knowledge Sharing Practices and Interpersonal Networking among Practicing Librarians in Polytechnic Libraries of Abia and Imo States, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was carried out to find out the correlation between knowledge sharing practices and interpersonal networking among librarians in Abia and Imo states. The objectives of the study centered on the key variables of knowledge sharing practices such as conferences, mentoring and social media. The population of the study is two hundred and sixty-two (262) respondents. It consisted of 158 female and 104 male librarians from four (4) polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states. The research used validated questionnaire for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using mean value and average mean to determine the mean variance from each Table of three research questions used for the study. The result of findings showed that of all the construct variables tested in the study, all of them revealed that there is a strong correlation between knowledge sharing practices of polytechnic librarians and interpersonal networking among them. The study therefore, concluded that there is a positive correlation between the variables of dependent and independent variables of the study, and recommend amongst others that polytechnic library management should encourage collaborative ways of sharing knowledge through conferences, mentoring, seminars, etc.
Keywords: *Knowledge, knowledge sharing, interpersonal, networking, librarians.*

1.1 Introduction

Knowledge is considered as a fundamental aspect of life and most crucial activity of knowledge management. The role of knowledge management is to spread and make knowledge accessible and usable within or between chosen organizations. According to the English online dictionary, knowledge is the awareness of a particular fact or situation, a state of having been informed or made aware of something (Render, 2023). In the 21st century, globalization, increasing competition, technological advancements and the rapid aging of the population, organizations and institutions are facing the need to change their policies and strategies (Shannk, 2020). Hence, the need for a new knowledge management (KM) practices for the sustainable development of organizations.

Knowledge sharing (KS) in an organization is necessary and one of the best way to develop knowledge management (KM) practices in the organization (Beijerse, 2023). Knowledge sharing becomes imperative if institutions like polytechnic libraries are to remain visible in the scheme of

human affairs. Knowledge sharing is critical for organizational good health and service delivery. It also encourages information interpersonal communication networks as new knowledge frontiers are created. This is because it increases information creativity, foster mutual information sharing, leads to new knowledge, innovations and capacity building (Hendricks, 2004).

Knowledge sharing enables individuals and organizations like polytechnic libraries to collaborate, share ideas, create new ones and acquire new information that were hitherto not at the disposal of all. In knowledge sharing, everyone benefits (Cumming, 2023). Through knowledge sharing, communication clouds are created and networks established among people. Knowledge sharing is critical for organizational good health and service delivery. It also encourages information interpersonal communication networks as new knowledge frontiers are created. This is because it increases information creativity, fosters mutual information sharing, leads to new knowledge, innovations and capacity building (Hendricks, 2024).

In knowledge sharing, there is also feedback mechanism which helps organizations like polytechnic libraries to make their policies, practices and attitudes change of the workers. Furthermore, organizational knowledge sharing depends on feedback and valuable contributions, giving affirmative feedbacks, participation and organizational guidelines for using social media tools (Wahlroos, 2010). A successful knowledge management depends on efficient and fruitful knowledge sharing among employees or staff in organizations or institutions. For the sustainable development and long-term survival of any organization, effective knowledge sharing is essential (Gaal, 2023). Therefore, to provide effective and efficient services and to enhance job performance for the benefit of the clientele, certain development programmes such as

attendance to conferences and workshops, seminars, mentoring, meetings are necessary programmes to attend for effective performance and libraries interpersonal networking among practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries of Abia and Imo states, Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Knowledge sharing practices exist in different forms and patterns in various libraries and among librarians. These practices come inform of conferences, seminars, meetings online discussions and workshops. At the same time, interpersonal networking encourages information flow among people.

Even though research works exist in knowledge sharing practices, there has not been existing empirical works to the knowledge of the researchers that correlates knowledge sharing and interpersonal networking among academic librarians in the South East as a whole. The ones that existed in this area of study have focused on the knowledge sharing practices and interpersonal networking among librarians in other geographical zones of Nigeria. This is therefore absurd neglect of practicing librarians and their knowledge sharing practice in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria. This is what motivated the researchers to investigate this topic.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to investigate knowledge sharing practices as a correlate of interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the relationship between social media and interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria.
2. Find out how mentoring relates with interpersonal networking of practicing

librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria.

3. Find out how conferences relate with interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

i. What is the relationship between social media and interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria?

ii. How does mentoring relates with interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria?

iii. What is the relationship between conferences and interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria?

2.1 Literature Review

The development of knowledge sharing in the early work presented after Nonaka's HBR article, knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing were used interchangeably with predominance towards knowledge transfer (KT). One of the earliest known interactions of knowledge sharing took the form of cave drawings in 15,000BC. From there, documentation became more sophisticated, evolving from imagery to alphabets, and from walls to scrolls. Monks and academics took on the role of transcribing books and organizing encyclopedias, storing knowledge in exclusive libraries. The invention of the printing press in 1440 was the first-time information was easily distributed via print material. It wasn't until over 400 years later that libraries were available to the general public (Mckendrick, 2022). Other perspectives that are strong in KS stream of research are the psychological and the sociological. Cabrera &Cabra (2023) include the psychological motion of social dilemmas when analyzing the inclination of individuals to share knowledge with other individuals regardless of the fact that the organization they work for has invested in specific technology to enable such knowledge sharing.

Knowledge sharing has been defined in many ways by different authors. But we shall discuss or review literature on authors related to librarianship. Collins (2024) reviews that knowledge sharing consists of two major elements: seeking information and ideas from workers and providing ideas and sights to others. This means that library and information science is the key to bridging quality service delivery to all, especially staff to staff interpersonal networking of practicing librarians. Knowledge sharing enables librarians to share information experiences which involves learning, understanding, extending, repeating information, ideas, view and resources among staff connected on a specific location.

In the view of Pauline (2012), in the Encyclopedia of Knowledge Management (Schweirt, 2006) in which several definitions of knowledge sharing are presented as follows, "knowledge sharing is the exchange of knowledge between and among individuals and within and among organizations. It is an exchange of knowledge between two individuals, one who communicates knowledge and one who assimilates it". In knowledge sharing, the focus in human capital and the interaction of individuals, are key variables that comes into play in the real sense. In organization such as libraries, knowledge is divided into two types: explicit and tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is the hand on skills best practices, special knowledge, heuristic, intuitions and so on. It is personal in origin, context and job specific and difficult to formalize and codify, difficult to capture, communicate and share and, poorly

documented but highly operational in the minds of the possessor. Explicit knowledge is easily codified, storable, transferable and easily expressed, and shares source of it are manuals (Serbian & Luan, 2024).

All activities related to the transmission and distribution of knowledge among individuals, groups or organizations are considered as knowledge sharing (Lunge, 2024). Knowledge sharing is defined as the exchange of knowledge between at least two parties in a reciprocal process allowing reshape and sense making of the knowledge in the new context (William, 2023). Furthermore, Nwachukwu (2023) also reviewed sharing knowledge as communicating knowledge within a group of people. This group may be members of institutions or colleague in the office. The aim being to improve the group's performance or to develop their potentials within the context of their academic background. A study conducted by McCall et al (2022) reveal that, there are four factors that influence knowledge sharing and they are: (i) Nature of knowledge, which is closely related to one's behavior to knowledge sharing to others. (ii) Informational factor, which refers to individual relationship in a group. (iii) Informational factor, that is a complex type of knowledge and (iv) Organizational factor, which is related to emotional bond between individual and organization. According to Benders (2023), there are two types of knowledge sharing activities, they are; intra-firms and inter-firm knowledge sharing. Intra-firm knowledge sharing activity is performed within the same organization through formal and informal meetings, dialogs and social networks. As a result, knowledge of the institution or organization can be updated for future use. While inter-firms knowledge sharing activity is performed in different organization, which allows firms to create value, share R & D, attain leadership, and access new efficient markets. This type of knowledge sharing can be used in two institutions to share knowledge uninterruptedly. Knowledge sharing is very important in order to develop polytechnics, create new standards and principles, save money and make money by applying knowledge sharing in the system (Frege, 2024).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theory that is used in this study as a theoretical framework of analysis is the social exchange theory. This theory was propounded by George Homans in 1961. Social exchange is defined as the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two parties. Homans is one of the first sociological theories that focuses on interpersonal exchanges, Homans explained social behaviour and the forms of social organization produced by social interaction by showing A's behaviour reinforced B's behavior (in a two-party relation between actors A and B), and how B's behaviour in contingent fashion reinforced A's behaviour in return. We engage in many exchanges on a daily basis with a wide range of people most often embedded in the groups, networks, organizations and institutions we inhabit. Thus, it is not surprising that exchange theory has remained one of the major theoretical perspectives on social interaction and social structure. The social exchange theory is useful for interpersonal networking. This was the explicit basis for continued social interaction at the "sub-institutional" level.

Homan's key prepositions framed the study of social behaviour in terms of rewards and punishment. Behaviour that is rewarded in general continues (up to the limit of diminishing marginal utility). His first preposition, the success preposition, states that behaviour that generates positive consequences is likely to be repeated. The second preposition, the stimulus preposition, states that behaviour that has been rewarded on

such occasions in the past will be performed in similar situations. The third proposition, specifies that the more valuable the result of an action to an individual, the more likely that action is to be performed. The social exchanges theory relates to interpersonal networking amongst staff in the sense that if staff are engaged or sponsored to attending conferences and workshops, rewarded and motivated in their different areas of professionalism, they could be provided with opportunities to interact socially and professionally with a wide range of colleagues outside one's workplace. This theory may help the library managers to understand motivation and reward as a factor that helps in the influence of knowledge sharing practices and staff interpersonal networking and for the growth and development of the library.

3.1 Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the correlational survey design. A population of 262 which comprised 158 female and 104 male librarians from four (4) polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states namely; Federal Polytechnic Isiochi, Umunneochi L.G.A., Abia Polytechnic Aba, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri and Imo Polytechnic Awomanma.

The study adopted census method. Questionnaire was designed based on the objectives and research questions of the study. The data collected was analyzed using frequency and mean variance to determine the level of correlation between dependent and independent variables of the study.

4.1 Data Analysis Based on Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between social media and interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria?

Table 1.1: The Relationship Between Social Media and Interpersonal Networking of Librarians

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN $\bar{x}$	REMARKS
It improves my work through collaboration	162	82	18	0	262	3.55	Significant
It helps me to enhance my communication with colleagues	175	72	15	0	262	3.62	Significant
It helps me to communicate extensively in groups	170	82	10	0	262	3.61	Significant
I learn new things using different applications	0	23	112	127	262	2.60	Not Significant

Significant Mean Value = 3.34

With a significant mean value of 3.55 as shown in Table 1.1, social media helps practicing librarians to improve their work through collaboration with other colleagues, it helps me to enhance my communication with colleagues ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62); it help me to link up with other colleagues ($\bar{x}$ = 3.61); I learn new things using different application ($\bar{x}$ = 2.60). The construct variables analysed show a positive relationship between social media and interpersonal networking among practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries studied, except item no. 4 which showed a negative relationship.

Research Question 2: How does mentoring relates with interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria?

Table 1.2: The Relationship b   etween Mentoring and Interpersonal Networking among Librarians

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	REMARKS
I learn new ways of handling information	168	76	18	0	262	3.57	Significant
I understand the best way to handling user's enquiries	149	96	17	0	262	3.50	Significant
I learn better ways to attending to users	25	35	85	117	262	3.12	Not Significant
It improves my competence in the office	161	78	10	13	262	3.48	Significant

Significant Mean Value = 3.41

From Table 1.2 above, the construct that says I learn new ways of handling information has a mean variance of (= 3.57); I understand the best way of user's enquiries has a mean variance of (= 3.50); I learn better ways of attending to users (= 3.12) ; it improves my competence in the office (= 3.48). All the constructs analyzed in Table 1.2 proved positive, except item no 3 which is negative, showing that mentoring has relationship with interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in the polytechnic libraries studied.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between conferences and interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries in Abia and Imo states, Nigeria?

Table 1.3: The Relationship between Conferences and Interpersonal Networking of Practicing Librarians

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	REMARKS
It increases my confidence as a librarian	169	78	15	0	262	3.56	Significant
It improves my working skills	171	80	11	0	262	3.61	Significant
It helps me to be more competent at workplace	159	88	15	0	262	3.54	Significant
It improves my skills in librarianship	35	10	55	162	262	3.41	Not Significant

Significant Mean Value = 3.53

With a significant mean value of 3.30 as indicated on Table 1.3, conferences increases my confidence as a librarian has a mean (= 3.56); it improves my working skills (= 3.61); it help me to be more competent at work place (= 3.54); it improves my skills in librarianship (= 3.41). From the data analyzed on the Table above, it became very clear that there is a positive correlation between conferences and interpersonal networking of practicing librarians in the polytechnic libraries of Abia and Imo states, Nigeria.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings revealed as follows;

i. Social media has a high significant relationship with the knowledge sharing practices of practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries more than any other predictor variables of knowledge sharing behavior of practicing librarian in the libraries studied.

ii. The findings revealed that mentoring has the tendency to engender disrespect among the younger ones if not properly handed. Thereby showing that mentoring has the capacity to eliminate inferiority complex among colleagues.

iii. Conference both local and international have proved to enhance librarian's skills in different areas of library services and librarian's performance at work place in the libraries studied.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn;

i. The study visibly shows that practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries studied in Abia and Imo states frequently share knowledge through various social media, such as Twitter, yahoo messenger, facebook, Wikis, etc.

ii. The study equally revealed that practicing librarians are aware of knowledge sharing benefits and its effects on their interpersonal networking.

iii. The study equally revealed that there are sufficient tools and techniques to allow knowledge sharing practices and interpersonal networking among practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries, and most of the library professionals are aware and make use of those tools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were proposed.

i. The study found that social media is a veritable tool in knowledge sharing and interpersonal networking of practicing librarians. The implication of this finding is that practicing librarians in polytechnic libraries are generally positive about the prospect of adopting and using of ICT in their interpersonal networking.

ii. Polytechnic libraries particularly in Abia and Imo states should implement more collaborative practices that will foster interaction among practicing librarians which will engender trust and openness through mentoring.

iii. Seminars and workshops should be organized periodically, and practicing librarians should be encouraged by library managers to attend a workshops, conferences or seminars at least once in a year in order to improve their interpersonal networking and also gain firsthand knowledge of new library advancement and innovative.

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