Article

Library Staff Perceptions on Conflict Management Practices in Library and Information Service Delivery for Resolution of National Conflicts.

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Abstract

The study examined library staff perception on conflict management practices in library and information service delivery for resolution of national conflicts. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was guided with four research questions in line with the specific purpose of the study. The entire population of 528 members of colleges of education library staff in South East and South-South, Nigeria was used for the study. This is composed of 350 Professional Librarians and 178 Para Professional Librarians. Structured questionnaire titled Conflict Management Practice Index was used to collect relevant data. Test-retest method was used to examine the instrument's reliability. Pearson's product moment was used to obtain co-efficient of reliability (r = 0.88) which is considered satisfactory. The result revealed that library staff were of the view that conflict management practices such as planning, organising, coordinating and funding may be applied in resolving national conflict. Conclusion and recommendation shows that library staff are to help in planning, organising and coordinating how library users could access the right information on national conflict resolution through library and information service delivery.

Key words: Library, service delivery, conflict, conflict resolution, conflict management practices, conflict management.

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Introduction

Libraries around the world exist to achieve a set of stated goals. The extent to which the goals are achieved, depend on the management's ability to subdue contending conflicts. Conflict is the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality. Conflict is literally defined as a state of disagreement over issues of substance or emotional antagonism and may arise due to anger, mistrust or personal clashes. Azamosa (2004) observed that conflicts in working environment involve the total range of behaviour and attitudes that is in opposition between leaders on one hand and working people on the other hand. Similarly, Babajide (2013) sees conflict as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have compatible concerns.

In a nation like Nigeria, conflicts are common between ethnic groups, religious groups, individuals, students, workers and employers; result from varieties of sources. Irene (2014) posits that conflicts are mostly caused by misunderstanding of information, incompetent management, lack of accountability, infrastructure inadequacies, difference in values and beliefs, lack of cooperation, lack of trust, frustration, poor remuneration/welfare, discrimination and injustice.

Library and information service delivery is an indispensable medium through which the stored knowledge is accessed and utilized in line with the needs of the user. Libraries serve human beings who are

undoubtedly different in many ways. This tends to institute disagreements between services needed and services available. Omeku and Ugwuanyi (2009) observed that librarians spend a considerable portion of their time dealing with conflicts in order to achieve effective service delivery within their libraries. Thus, in curtailing conflicts, library staff should possess skills and attitude necessary for effective and efficient dissemination of the right information to the right users at the right time (Echezona, 2008). This means that the staff should be abreast with current knowledge as it is a well-known fact that knowledge keeps on changing.

It is understandable that library houses all manner of knowledge-based resources including the ones addressing issues of conflict (International, national and personal). However, library staff – professional and non-professionals exist to help in ensuring the information 'seekers', especially on conflict related information are well guided in order to access the right knowledge. For these library staff to achieve such objective, they must be abreast of conflict management practices which are needed for effectively dealing with conflicts.

Conflict resolution and conflict management are often used interchangeably, yet both term are slightly different. Conflict resolution refers to the ways through which two or more parties find peaceful solution to a disagreement, especially by ending the conflict. However, it is understandable that some conflict situations cannot really be resolved hence, the preference of the term conflict management rather than conflict

resolution (Oyeshola, 2005). Conflict management enables parties to co-exist amicably and deal with their disputes without necessarily resolving the underlying conflict. Conflict management is therefore the practice of recognizing and dealing with disputes in a rational, balanced and effective manner (Ekpo, 2016).

Management in organizational situation has to do with employing all administrative processes on internal and external resources in other to achieve predetermined goals. Conflict management practices encompass the activities of planning, organizing, coordinating, funding, controlling, commanding, directing, evaluating, staffing and motivating in other to the attain set goals (Orji, Mando & Ajaegbo, 2017). These administrative elements could be applied when handling conflicts, especially large scale disagreements or national conflict.

Clear understanding of appropriate managerial variables will go a long way to help in achieving conflict resolution in the libraries and help to promote national progress. Therefore the present study is focused on management variables of planning, organization, coordination and funding. This choice is guided by the realization that the four management functions are the core elements of management given the fact that each of the other functions like staffing evaluation and control is intricately linked to planning, organization or coordination. Therefore, this study is being conducted to evaluate how conflict management

practices could be adopted in library and information service delivery for resolution of national conflicts.

Statement of the Problem

It is worthy of note that, for the purpose of the libraries to be effectively actualized, harmonious and conflict-free work environment is necessary. But, the reality is that conflict is inevitable in every society or organisation. Despite all that may have been put in place to ensure a conflict-free work environment for staff members, it appears the conflict management styles earlier adopted by libraries in managing conflict for service delivery have not been effective, as it is often surrounded by controversies. Most staff members are often not trained professionally in handling conflict; hence they are incompetent in managing conflict experiences. Such problems transform into conflicts within library staff on one hand and between staff and their college librarian on the other. Most of the affected staff members have suffered intimidations; some have health challenges that resulted to absenteeism from work. Some have low morale while others distance themselves from colleagues. Such staff members do not put in their hardest at work and it causes disruptions in the work flow in the libraries. Such libraries have in return lost some of their professional staff and these tend to make the libraries operate at a low speed. Consequent upon this, the fundamental problem of the study is: what are conflict management practices among libraries for service delivery needed for resolving national conflicts.

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Objectives of the Study
The purpose of the study is to find out perceptions of library staff on the role of management practices on resolution of national conflict. Specifically, the study:

1. Find out the extent library staff perceive planning as management practice that will aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict.

2. Ascertain the extent library staff perceive organising as management practice will aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict.

3. Examine the extent library staff perceive coordination as management practice will aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict.

4. To find out the extent library staff perceive funding as management practice will aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict.

Research Questions
This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what the extent does library staff perceive planning as management practice aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict?

2. To what the extent does library staff perceive organising as management practice aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict?

3. To what the extent does library staff perceive coordination as management practice aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict?

4. To what the extent does library staff perceive funding as management practice aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict?

Method

Research Design
The study adopted descriptive survey design which is used when a researcher intends to elicit responses from a relatively large number of respondents by administering pertinent instruments for collecting primary data on a portion of the population known as sample. This research design is appropriate for this study which seeks to administer questionnaire on sample of respondents with regards to conflict management practices that will be used for libraries and information service delivery which are needed for resolving national conflict.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques
The entire population of 528 members of colleges of education library staff in South East and South-South, Nigeria was used for the study. This is composed of 350

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Professional Librarians and 178 Para Professional Librarians. It is equally made up of 268 males and 260 females.

Instrument for Data Collection
The instrument that was used for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled Conflict Management Practices Index (CMPI). The CMPI is divided into two parts namely part A and part B. Part A. The rating scale is as follows: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) for the clusters.

Validity of the Instrument
The questionnaire titled Conflict Management Practice Index (CMPI) was face and content validated through consultation with three Veteran Researchers in Library and Information Science, Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation from University of Nigeria Nsukka and Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

Reliability of the Instrument
The questionnaire (CMPI) was pilot-tested for reliability in South-South geo-political zone of the country. It was administered on 25 Librarians and 10 Para professionals of both the public colleges of education in the geo-political zone. The administration was carried out by test-retest technique, using an interval of one month. Pearson's product moment was used to obtain co-efficient of reliability (r = 0.88) which confirmed the instrument's consistency in measuring what it is expected to measure.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using the following statistical measures. Arithmetic mean(x̄) was used to answer the research questions, with decision point of 2.50. Hence items with x values of 2.50 and above were accepted. Items with mean value of less than 2.50 were rejected.

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Results

Research Question 1: To what the extent does planning as management practice aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict?

Table 1: Mean rating of responses of library staff on how planning as management practice aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict

SN	Planning as management practice	X	Decision
1.	Adequate planning helps in ensuring that the required manpower at libraries are projected and recommended for employment so as to improve library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.82	Accepted
2.	Adequate planning helps in ensuring that the required library equipment, structures and other supporting tools are envisioned and provided so as to improve library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.55	Accepted
3.	Adequate planning helps in ensuring that budget are prepared, clarifying how expected funds are to be judiciously used to curtail wastages, misappropriation and embezzlement, thereby enhancing library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.80	Accepted
4.	Adequate planning helps in projecting the capacity and nature of the library in relation to targeted users so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.74	Accepted
5.	Adequate planning helps in making provisions for possible challenges that may arise in the college libraries as well as strategies to overcome it so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.88	Accepted

From table 1, it is understood that all the questionnaire items (1-5) are accepted. This is because each item's arithmetic mean is equal to or greater than 2.50.

Table 2: Mean rating of responses of library staff on how organising as management practice for resolution of national conflict

SN	Organising as management practice	X	Decision
6.	Organising as a conflict management practice helps in establishing various departments/units in the colleges of education libraries for enhanced library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.53	Accepted
7.	Organising as a conflict management practice helps in defining the duties and responsibilities of each unit and staff members so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.65	Accepted
8.	Organising as a conflict management practice helps in the establishment of committees for peculiar tasks as the need arise so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.54	Accepted
9.	Organising as a conflict management practice helps in senior librarians in delegating duties with appropriate authority to subordinate library staff members as the need arise so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.71	Accepted
10.	Organising as a conflict management practice helps in mobilizing resources needed for promoting library programmes and implementation so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.68	Accepted

Table 2 reveal that all the questionnaire items (6-10) are accepted. It is observed that each item's arithmetic mean is equal to or greater than 2.50.

Table 3: Mean rating of responses of library staff on how coordination as management practice aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict

SN	Coordination as management practice	X	Decision
11.	Coordination as conflict management practice helps to ensure no department or unit of the library is to work contrary to specified activities so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.63	Accepted
12.	Coordination as conflict management practice helps to ensure pursuit of same goal by all library staff members so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.77	Accepted
13.	Coordination as conflict management practice helps to foster team spirit among library workers so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.69	Accepted
14.	Coordination as conflict management practice helps to eliminate unnecessary rivalry among library workers and library users by creating sense of cooperation and tolerance which aid service delivery	2.56	Accepted
15.	Coordination as conflict management practice helps to unifying the activities of different departments of the library so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.57	Accepted

Table 3 shows that all the questionnaire items (11-15) are not accepted. It is understandable that each item's arithmetic mean is equal to or greater than 2.50.

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Table 4: Mean rating of responses of library staff on how funding as management practice aid library and information service delivery in resolution of national conflict

SN	Funding as management practice	X	Decision
16.	Adequate funding helps in acquisition of functional library and other supporting equipment and materials needed so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.78	Accepted
17.	Adequate funding helps in maintenance and preservation of library equipment and materials needed so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.70	Accepted
18.	Adequate funding helps in payment of salaries and allowances of library staff members which ensure their commitment as needed so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.85	Accepted
19.	Adequate funding helps in ensuring needed manpower for enhanced service delivery are employed at the colleges of education libraries so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.88	Accepted
20.	Adequate funding helps in training and retraining programmes are implemented for library staff members so as to keep them abreast of current practices so as to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution	2.84	Accepted

Table 4 reveals that all the questionnaire items (16-20) are accepted. It means that each item's arithmetic mean is either equal to or greater than 2.50.

Discussion of Findings

The study determined the conflict management practices that will be used in libraries for information service delivery for resolving national conflicts. Result shows that library staff are of the view that planning as a conflict management practice helps in ensuring that the required manpower are employed, supporting tools are provided, budget are prepared and secured, projecting the capacity and nature of the library in relation to targeted users as well as so as to making provisions for possible challenges that may arise in order to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution.

Library staff are of the view that organising as a conflict management practice helps in establishing various departments/units, defining the duties and responsibilities of each unit and staff members, mobilizing resources needed for promoting library programmes and implementation as well as guide senior librarians in delegating duties with appropriate authority to subordinate library staff members as the need arise in order to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution.

For coordination as conflict management practice majority of the respondents were of the view that coordination helps to ensure no department or unit works, ensures pursuit of same goal contrary to specified activities, foster team spirit, eliminate unnecessary rivalry helps to unifying the activities of different departments in order to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution.

The respondents reports that funding as conflict management practice helps in acquisition of library resources, helps in maintenance and preservation, payment of salaries and allowances as well as helps to ensure training and retraining programmes are implemented in order to enhance library and information service delivery for national conflict resolution.

Conclusion

It is understandable that some conflicts are never resolved rather they are managed. Results from the study shows that library staff are of the perception that greater understanding and application of elements of management in handling issues of national status will provide a situation whereby parties experiencing conflict co-exist amicably and deal with their disputes. Therefore, delivering the foregoing conflict remedy ideas to the public can be more effective through the library.

Recommendations

Based on findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Library staff should plan on the best ways to start circulating the idea that adequate planning is indispensable in handling conflict. They may liaise with mass media to sensitize the public on how planning as conflict management practice can help to remedy national conflicts.

2. The issue calling for Nigeria to be restructured is an evidence that the nation is not well organised. Libraries contain different learning materials on how Nigeria can be re-organised in order to manage the conflict ravaging the country. It is important that library staff introduce special section dealing mainly how to resolve national conflict so that library visitors/users will easily access the right information.

3. Team spirit is indispensable in every organisation, if targeted objectives are to be actualized. Library staff should library visitors are well coordinated and directed at where to obtain the right information with regards to national conflict. The good manner in which these users are directed will help them form good opinions that they considered important irrespective of differences.

4. Inadequate funding or availability of financial resource to implement manner good projects and policies remains one of the major sources of conflict all over the world. Money is central to implementation of programs. Therefore, library and information service delivery should elaborate more

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on the need to ensure financial resource is made adequate and appropriately utilized.

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