



Staff User Attitude towards Overdue Fines in two Nigerian University Libraries

Adeniran, Pauline

Head,

Cataloguing and Classification Unit,

Redeemer's University,

Ogun State, Nigeria.

omedop2006@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This research is conducted to find out the attitudes of staff users towards overdue fines in Nigeria Academic libraries. Redeemer's University and Ajayi Crowther University both in Nigeria were used as subjects for the study. The instruments used for collecting data for the study were questionnaire, oral interview and observation. The sampled population of the study was teaching and research staff who were available as at the time this research was conducted. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed the users' opinions and feelings about overdue fines. No significant difference was found between either university libraries with respect to their users' attitude toward overdue fines. This paper makes recommendations that can help libraries boost the collection of overdue fines.

Introduction

In academic libraries all over the world, fines are imposed on overdue materials as punishment measure for defaulters as well as a means of funds generation for libraries, Ifidon (1999). It is a practice that is as old as the library itself. When resources on loan are not returned on time, a fine is charged at a rate determined by the library. Adomi (2003) notes that overdue fines are the amount a library user is charged for keeping borrowed material beyond the loan period. Libraries are responsible for managing large collections of materials and must provide an incentive for these materials to be returned in a timely manner. Imposition of overdue fines on those users who do not return borrowed materials within the permitted period by a given library is one of the means used to regulate the conduct of users. Edewor (2010) has pointed out that the payment of overdue fine is as old as libraries and to Anderson (1984), it is a library tradition.

However, divergent opinions have been expressed on the imposition of overdue fines. Whittaker (1993) for instance sees fines on overdue books as a charge for misuse of [library] services and also as one of the means of generating income for a library. Adomi (2003) also quotes Ifidon (1999) as stating that overdues are a miscellaneous source of funding for library. Anderson (1984b) too has s inflexible and rule-oriented by the public and a contributory factor to that image are the rules that deal with overdue materials and such image discourages library use.



Adomi (1993) thinks that it is unethical for library to allow users to keep books indefinitely and imposition of fines on defaulting users is the commonest means the world over to compel users to return borrowed to the library. According Anderson (1984a) some [people] also believe that imposition of fines are a good educational tool as it teaches people to be responsible, respect others' rights, public property, and rules and regulations.

Overdue fines are used as an incentive for borrowers to return library materials after a reasonable loan period, so that materials may be properly accounted borrowed materials beyond the due date. The amount charged as fine varies from library to library while the status of the reader is also considered. Most libraries have adopted the following in calculating fines for overdue materials

- i. Fines are calculated from the “due date” to the date the book is properly checked back into the system.
- ii. The “due date” will always fall on a day the library is open.
- iii. Overdue fines are calculated for the days the library is open and closed.
- iv. Books left in the outside book drop when the library is closed will be back-dated to the last day the library was open.
- v. It is the responsibility of borrowers to remember “due dates” on items renewed online.

Different opinions have been given by many regarding overdue charges in libraries. To some, it is a means of deterring library users from keeping library materials too long. Some feel sending reminder notices is better while some think it is unethical to charge overdue fines in libraries.

This study is carried out to find out the opinions and feelings of staff users toward overdue fines in academic libraries in Nigeria; the challenges libraries face in enforcing payment of overdue fines; and whether payments of overdue fines have in any way contributed to the enhancement of library operations and services. In the light of the above, data shall be drawn from Redeemer's University academic staff and those of Ajaiyi Crowther University both of which are private universities for this survey. The reason for using the two universities is so that the feelings of their staff users towards overdue fines would be known since similar studies have been conducted on some public universities

Historical Background of Redeemer's University

Redeemer's University is one of the approved private universities in Nigeria, and commenced academic activities in 2005 with three colleges, namely: Colleges of Humanities, Management Sciences and Natural Sciences. Among private universities in Nigeria, Redeemer's University was established out of the desire of the Redeemed Christian Church of God to make an impact in the formwork of university education in the country having realized the role university education can play in the social and technological development of a nation. The parent body of this university not only thought of establishing a private university to provide for additional places to absorb the growing students population in the country but to also considerably improve upon the existing standard of teaching and learning in the universities. The proposal to establish Redeemer's University is therefore a notable effort towards producing the requisite high level manpower required for the development of the nation. Having fulfilled all the National Universities Commission (NUC) criteria for establishing a private university in the country, the Federal Government granted an operating license to the Redeemer's University on



Friday 7th January, 2005. The University took off in September, 2005 with four hundred and seventy-three (473) pioneer students who matriculated to pursue bachelor degrees in various programmes. (Redeemer’s University 1st Convocation Programme, 2009).

Historical Background of Ajayi Crowther University

The Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo was established by the Supra Diocesan Board (West) of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), has its origins in the defunct CMS training institution, Abeokuta and the defunct St. Andrews College, Oyo. The University started as CMS Training Institution in Abeokuta in 1853 from where it was relocated to Lagos (1868 to 1896). In March 1896, it was transplanted to Oyo retrospectively in 1920. At inception, St. Andrews College, Oyo produced holders of Grade II Teachers Certificate while the Divinity Course for training church ministers was added to the curriculum between 1910 and 1942 and the proprietorship of the College was transferred from CMS, London to the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). A salient feature in the History of St. Andrews is that it became welded to the church as a snail is inseparably linked with its shell. In 1977 Government took over the control and administration of all schools in the Nigerian Federation and with this development the Church of Nigeria was divested of her Proprietorship of the College. However, the St. Andrews College Old Boys Association (SACOBA) interest and by extension that of the Church, in the growth and development of St. Andrews did not wane. Thus, in response to SACOBA's petition, the erstwhile Oyo State Government upgraded the Institution to NCE campus in 1980 and to the full fledged College of Education in 1985.

The dream of all Andrians (products of St. Andrews College) and their well wishers as well as the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) was that St. Andrews College, Oyo, should ultimately be transformed into a full-fledged University, given her success story and her pioneering role as the Precursor of Tertiary Education in Nigeria. The final step towards fulfilling this dream was taken on 7 September, 1999 when the Church of Nigeria granted SACOBA's request for the establishment of Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo at the site of the former St. Andrews College, Oyo under the proprietorship of the Church. Having satisfied the rigorous criteria prescribed by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for the establishment of Universities in Nigeria, Ajayi Crowther University (ACU) was granted license to operate as a Private University in Nigeria on 7 January 2005

<http://acu.edu.ng/index.php/about-us/historical-background>

Background

Library	Redeemer’s University, Mowe	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo
Date established	2005	2006
Library stock {Books}	19, 690	13,796
Staffing: Professional/Academic Librarians	8	6
Para-Professional	2	4
Admin./Secretarial staff	1	1
Library assistants, attendants	14	15



Registered staff user population	167	98
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Objectives of the Study

- To find the frequency payment of overdue fines by staff users
- To find how many of those who borrow from the Library have paid overdue fine(s) before;
- To find how those who have paid overdue felt when they were asked to pay for the overdue (s);
- To find why overdue fines are charged by libraries
- To proffer recommendations on the way forward.

Methodology

The survey research method was adopted for this study. The population of staff users was drawn from Redeemer's University, Mowe and Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo both private universities in Nigeria. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire, oral interview and observation. A total of two hundred and sixty-five (265) registered staff users of the two universities formed the population of the study. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to all registered staff users who were available at the time this research was conducted. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Findings

Out of the 100 questionnaires administered to the respondents, 56 were completed. The completed questionnaires were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. These are distributed as shown below:

Table 1: Percentage of Returned Questionnaire

Respondents	Questionnaires returned	Percentage
Teaching Staff	33	59%
Research Staff	23	41%
Total	56	100%

Out of the 56 (100%) respondents, 33 (59%) were teaching staff while 23 (41%) were research staff. This shows that a majority of the respondents were teaching staff.

Table 2: Distribution of Staff Users by Gender

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	34	61
Female	22	39%
Total	56	100%

Majority of the respondents were male as shown in the table above.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Qualification

Qualification	Respondents	Percentage
PhD	13	23%
Masters	28	50%
B Sc	15	27%
Total	56	100%

Out of the 56 (100%) respondents, 13 (23%) were P hD holders, 28 (50%) were Masters degree holders and 15 (27%) were first degree holders. A majority of the respondents were Masters Degree holders.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Discipline.

Discipline	Respondents	Percentage
Business	4	7%
Computer Science	1	2%
Statistics	1	2%
Accounting	2	4%
English	9	16%
Mathematics	1	2%
Library	15	27%
History	1	2%
Mass Comm.	4	7%
Physics	4	7%
Biology	2	4%
Transport & Tourism Studies	2	4%
Chemistry	8	14%
Banking and Finance	2	4%
Total	56	100 percent

Table 5 shows the distribution of respondents by discipline. Although the questionnaire was administered randomly, Library had the largest number with 15, or 27%, followed by English, 9, or 16%

Table 5: Attitude of Staff User towards Overdue Fines

Attitude	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
Amount fixed as overdue fine is adequate	37	6	13
Overdue fines should be discontinued	43	11	2
It is wrong to ask staff to pay for keeping borrowed books	42	13	1
Overdue fines are punitive measure intended against library defaulters	34	19	3
Prefer to keep a useful book beyond the due date	40	13	3
Feel bad when asked to pay	26	26	4
Consult with staff users on amount to be charged as overdue fines	23	20	13

Table 6 reveals the attitude of staff users towards overdue fines. Majority of the respondents 37 (66%) noted that the meager fines on overdue materials is adequate. At Redeemer’s University library, and Ajayi Crowther University, defaulting staff users are required to pay NGN 10.00 daily fine for overdue book. This explains why most staff users prefer to keep borrowed material beyond the due date.

Item 3 shows that 42 (75%) of the respondents agreed that it is wrong to ask staff to pay for keeping borrowed books. Fines are paid to the institution’s account both at Redeemer’s University and Ajaye Crowther University. Overdue fines are not meant for the library but for the institution as a whole. Another 43 (77%) of the respondents agreed that overdue fines should be discontinued. This view does not support Adomi (2003) and Zaki (1994). Overdue fines are charged in order to enhance library services. An overdue fine helps to monitor the activities of library users. 34 (61%) respondents agreed that overdue fines are punitive measures intended against library defaulters. Only 13 (23%) of the respondents indicated that they do not like to keep useful book material beyond the due date. Majority of them prefer to keep borrowed material beyond the due date without paying a fine. Others prefer to be consulted on the amount to be charged as overdue fines.

Table 6: Frequency of payment of overdue fines by staff users

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Rarely	34	61%
Often	19	34%
Very often	3	5%
Total	56	100%

Table 7 show the frequency of payment of overdue fines by staff users. A majority of the respondents rarely pay overdue fines. This finding supports Adomi (2003).

Table 7: Benefits of Overdue Fines

Benefit	Respondents	Percentage
A means of generating fund for the library	14	25%
Compel users to return borrowed books on time	15	27%
Serves as a corrective measure to delinquent users	11	20%
Enhances timely access to library material	8	14%
Enhances library services	8	14%

Table 8 revealed the benefits of overdue fines. 15 (27%) of the respondents mentioned that it compels users to return borrowed books on time. 14 (25%) were of the opinion that overdue fine is a means of fund generation for the library. This affirms the views of Ifidon (1999). 11 (20%) indicated that overdue fines serve as a corrective measure to delinquent users. Others noted that it enhances timely access to library materials and library services

Table 8: Constraints in Payment of Overdue Fines by Staff Users

Constraints	Respondents	Percentage
Unwillingness of staff user to pay overdue fines	19	34%
Circulation staff under pressure from senior library staff to cancel or reduce overdue fines	9	16%
Circulation staff do not always collect fines from staff users	8	14%
Meager library fines discourage payment	20	36%

Table 9 shows the constraints associated with the payment of overdue fines by staff users. 20 (36%) of the respondents indicated that the meager library fines discourage them from paying overdue fines. 19 (34%) of them noted the unwillingness of staff users to pay overdue fines while some affirm that circulation staff under pressure from senior library staff to cancel or reduce overdue fines. Others mentioned that circulation staff do not always collect fines from staff users

Conclusion

This research was carried out to determine the attitudes of staff users towards overdue fines in Nigeria academic libraries. As good as the collection of overdue fines is, there are several problems which hinder its collection in Nigerian Universities libraries. The study also revealed that collection of overdue fines compels users to return borrowed books on time so that other users can have access to them. In some libraries however, payment of overdue fines are not being enforced by library staff.

From the forgoing, the study recommends the followings.



- Reminder messages. Email/Text message should be sent to borrowers at least three (3) days before the due date. This should remind borrowers to return borrowed items to the library by the due date.
- User Education. The library should continuously educate its clients through its orientation programme on library rules regarding loaning of materials
- The library should provide bins where borrowers could drop borrowed items beyond the library operating hours
- Overdue fines should be enforced by libraries, with adequate support from parent institutions.
- Library users, irrespective of their status and influence, should be made to pay overdue fines by library management
- Defaulting users should be denied the use of the library



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