Communication and analytical skills of staff in University Library Service

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Abstract

Libraries are developed to satisfy the information needs of users within a given setting. The staff of university libraries are trained to provide the necessary information resources to meet the information demands of its users in the academic context, thereby facilitating the accomplishment of the library's triple mission of teaching, learning, and research. This research was carried out to examine how staff communication such as correspondence, job instructions, notices, memos, letters, and analytical skills in terms of assessing information contents enhance service delivery in Federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The study made use of two research questions and hypotheses. Ex-post facto was adopted as research design. The population of the study consisted 271 respondents (68 professionals and 203 para-professional librarians) in federal universities in Uyo, Calabar and Benin. Total sampling technique was used to sample 271 respondents. The researcher developed an instrument entitled "Communication and Analytical Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)" for data collection. The researcher with the help of research assistants administered copies of the questionnaire to respondents in the selected universities. Method of data analysis was mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and independent t-Test to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that analytical and communication skills of staff significantly influence service delivery in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. It was recommended among others that staff of university libraries should possess the relevant skill of communication as they make use of language, images, sound, and new technologies to enhance effective service delivery.

Keywords: Media literacy, service delivery, communication, staff skills, academic libraries.

Introduction

University library personnel are adopting communication and analytical skills in order to keep up with contemporary trends in library practices in this more competitive and dynamic information environment. In addition to the technical abilities required to manage a library, it also heavily depends on a variety of soft skills, such as communication and analytical, which must be developed in order to provide satisfactory services in libraries. Skill typically infers a judgment of quality particularly in terms of meeting of goals or objectives of the library. Holland[1] posits that the ability to perform an action with predefined results, typically in a predetermined amount of time, energy, or both, is referred to as a skill. Since the entire field of librarianship is service-oriented, which requires both providing services and doing so efficiently with an eye on user's satisfaction, librarians must actively participate in the discussion about the skills and competencies necessary to operate in information environments. For rapid service delivery to be possible, librarians, users, and the library's actual collection must effectively communicate with one another and function well together. Communication skill has the capacity of developing and distributing messages to others. Communication in a formal work system such as a library can be termed organisational communication. It can be from superiors to subordinates (downward) example, correspondence, job instructions, notices, memos, letters, acknowledgment, reports, reprimands, feedback, and the like as directed by official procedure Philip[2]. Communication can also occur from staff to their superiors (upward communication) though this often depends on the extent of the open door policy in operation. Phillip[2] further enumerated that the flow of messages between colleagues is horizontal communication which occurs during the day–to–day interactions, for example, grapevine information and informal discussion. By adopting effective communication skill, librarians can create and disseminate their own information contents rather than relying on commercially created resources. They will also have a greater understanding of the processes for content selection, editing, and creation. Five general purposes of communication include learning, helping others, interacting with them or forging relationships, providing some kind of service, and influencing or motivating them in certain direction. The effectiveness of staff communication is therefore crucial to the performance of library services.

It would be pointless to attempt building a library collection that does not meet the information needs of users. Therefore, the use of analytical skill is sacrosanct. Analytical skill implies the librarian's cognitive ability in asking questions about information content of an intellectual work, such as, the reputation of the author, what techniques does it use to attract and hold attention? Values and points of views depicted in the given source/ content? How might different people interpret the information content? What is omitted or left out? Additionally,

analytical skill entails to interpret, analyse and evaluate a range of information in their various formats in print media, images, video and films, video games, the internet and social media. In other words, the ability to analyse information resources' structure, content, design, form, and sequence is viewed in this study as analytical skill required of librarians. It further involves assessing information resources' reliability and acceptance to ensure they are in tandem with users' needs. It is against this background that this study is conducted to examine communication and analytical skills of staff in university library services. As at the time of this study, three out of six Federal University libraries in South-South Nigeria were used for the study.

Statement of the problem: Given the complexity of the multi-media world in which librarians have to access, the quality and content of services offered to users, depends on how well library staff members comprehend and assess the collection. Therefore, mastering analytical and communication abilities is crucial for delivering top-notch service.

Librarians in most academic libraries unfortunately, do not seem to utilise these skills to their full potential in providing users with optimal services. One then wonders and asks, could communication and analytical skills influence service delivery by librarians? If yes, in what ways. It is based on the raised question that this study aims to examine how communication and analytical skills of staff influence service delivery in university libraries.

Research Questions: The following questions are raised to guide the study; i. How do communication skills influence service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria? ii. How do analytical skills influence service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria?

Hypotheses: The following hypotheses are postulated to guide the study; i. There is no significant influence of communication skills on service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria, ii. There is no significant influence of analytical skills on service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework: The theoretical framework of the study is predicated on Uses and Gratification Theory by Katz *et al*[3] and Servqual Model by Zeithaml *et al*[4].

Uses and Gratification Theory by Katz *et al*[3]: The theory was postulated in 1974 by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. It was to explain why people do not wait for media messages to arrive, but actively seek out media that provide them with information that they need. The theory states that the public will deliberately choose and utilize exact information resources to satisfy their demands and get satisfaction of their needs. Uses and Gratification Theory explains that different media users can use the same media messages for different

purposes, depending on their individual needs and goals. The theory perceives the recipient of media messages as actively influencing the effect process, since they selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain the media messages on the basis of their needs and beliefs.

The theory hypothesises that satisfaction can be accomplished not only in relative to information source, but from the analysis derived from a particular medium, as well as from the setting in which it is expended. Thus, regardless of the disapprovals to the uses and gratifications theory, it vestiges the prevailing method for answering the question: Why do the public use media? The theory is grounded on the conventions that i. the media user is on the go, ii. the choice of media depends on the needs of the user, iii. all mass media compete with other sources of interest, and iv. cultural significance should not be taken into consideration as media users explores their own opinions.

This theory is related to the work because, librarians apply literacy skills in selecting media resources like print media, electronic media, social media, internet and database as means to fulfill the library objectives and goals of communicating and disseminating information. The work is therefore described within the context of the Uses and Gratification Theory since the concept offers the understanding and reason some information resources are so extensively patronised and others are not.

Servqual Model by Zeithaml *et al*[4]: Service quality (Serqual) theory was developed in 1988 by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry. Servqual is a consequential method that may be used by services organization to improve service quality. Serqual takes into justification the sensitivies of consumers of the relative significance of service characteristics. This allows an organization to select and to adopt its resources to expand acute service qualities. The theory signifies service excellence as the difference between a consumer's potentials for a service posing and the consumers' views of the service established, necessitating users discuss about both their prospects and observations.

Servqual is a measure established to evaluate consumer observations of superiority in service. It festers the view of service value into five perspectives as follows: i. Trustworthiness- Capacity to execute service reliably and exactly. ii. Guarantee- Capability of workforce to stimulate assurance and confidence. iii. Tangibles- Physical facilities, equipment, staff appearance, etc. iv. Approachability - The degree of rendering specific services. v. Receptiveness- Disposition to support and answer to consumer demands.

This theory is considered suitable in this study because academic libraries make effort regularly to provide services using elements outlined in the serqual theory. These elements are associated to this research, because it will guide academic

libraries to improve their services using communication and analytical skills to determine source reliability.

Literature review: The concepts of the study are discussed as follow:

Communication skill: The goal of the service-oriented profession of librarianship is to satisfy users. The effectiveness of communication between users, librarians, and the physical content of the library is essential to providing this service more quickly and healthily. For effective library services and user satisfaction, effective communication skills are necessary. Communication processes according to Philip[5] features either as verbal (oral e.g. conversation) or non-verbal (action and attitude). Interactions between librarians and users, are always taking place in libraries such as giving and receiving information, interactions between people and texts. The nature of the library is communicative, and its main purpose is achieved through communication Çetintaş[6]. Communication in libraries must be two-way and permit information sharing between parties. The library listens to all of its users to understand what they think of the library services and interacts with the users using techniques that they can grasp. The need for more effort in communicating with individuals from different cultures and background may arise. It is everyone's right, without any discrimination, to benefit from libraries and information centers, which are indisputably important in the educational and cultural development of individuals. It is extremely important, especially for librarians who communicate directly with users, to have effective communication skill. In short, positive communication between staff and users is essential for efficient service as well as internal communication among library staff.

Communication as skill is defined by Gonzalez, *et al*[7] as the capability to report facts through discourse, letters and other forms of media. Therefore it is not only about transmitting information to others, but encompasses active enquiring, attention, and responding. According to Vamsi[8] communication skills are the competences to express in diverse circumstances such as peers relationships at work place, customers, workers, businesses, dealers, etc., while discharging duties at the work place. DeVito[9] recognized eight methods of communications, intrapersonal: speaking to oneself, interpersonal: passing message between two people or more, interviewing: interacting through questions and answers, organisational: information sharing in an organisation, small group: 5-10 persons interactions, public: passing message across to the public, computer-mediated: using computers to send message and mass communication: passing information by aural and pictorial forms. Antwi and Bello as cited by Hamid and Younus[10] outline three styles of communications in an organisation, downwards: sending message from bosses to subordinates, upwards: passing message from subordinates to their bosses, horizontal: interactions between peers. Therefore, channels of information sharing are two-way in which discussion of opinions, approaches, or thoughts occurs. Gonzalez, *et al*[7] described that knowledge sharing is accomplished when the discussion or alteration of facts transpires between individuals. The complete process is designated through Moita[11] in four stages; chief is source or encoder, another is message, next is receiver, fourth part is decipherer and comment. Occasionally 'noise' hampers meaning or part of the process e.g. linguistic obstacle.

DeKay in Hamid and Younus[10] similarly declares that appropriate message has a constructive consequence on job performance. Appropriate information sharing impact a team toward its objective attainment Reinsch and Gardner[2]. According to Conrad and Newberry as cited by Hamid and Younus[10], the way in which employees share information is very important for effective service delivery. They suggested that work forces have to develop and improve information sharing capabilities for all types of events, not for precise tasks. Thus, for efficient library services to be provided, there must be effective communication between staff and users. For instance, when serving library patrons at the circulation desk, effective communication is essential. It helps library staff build and sustain cooperative relationships for higher levels of productivity at work. Effective communication includes not just effectively conveying a message to others but listening carefully, asking pertinent questions, and responding in a timely manner. Libraries with good communication give employees precise instruction, which improves job output and reduces uncertainty about the difficulty of the task at hand.

Analytical skill: Analytical skill is directly related to critical thinking and problem-solving. It is the data in order to provide an answer or resolve a dilemma. In library practice particularly, it involves the capacity to gather, review, examine, and synthesizing of information resource contents for reliability, appropriateness and acceptance. Analytical skill requires examining an argument or piece of facts and determining its veracity and believability. In order to assess the organization, information, strategy, method, and arrangement of information resources, librarians are thought to need analytical skill. It further means that librarians examine the authorship, audience, message's format and style, points of view, characters, themes and mood of media tools in order to determine the objectivity and credibility of the material Baran[14]. It also entails evaluating the credibility and acceptance of information Philip[14]. The ability to analyse involves breaking down content into relevant components. Additionally, library staff who is media literate analyses literary devices, context, and possibilities; is familiar with media symbols; understands how media manipulates viewers' emotions; and recognises both implicit and explicit meanings in the content before sending out to users. According to Gainer[15], a library staff needs to have adequate understanding of the contextual, organization and operation of information resources to understand and deliberate what is obtainable. One could argue that one of the most important components of analytical skill is the capability to examine. This is relevant given that analytical skill is the capacity to decipher symbolic

texts, and that its fundamental objective is to promote critical autonomy in interactions with media resources and their content. After accessing media resources, a particular set of abilities must be shown. These skills include the ability to critically assess the substance, structure, design, and organisation of the message regarding literary, artistic, social, political, and economic issues. Analysis includes the capacity to decompose media contents into useful parts. When exposed to media messages, library staff either superficially adopt them or break them down into their component parts and carefully consider each one. This method involves looking at the composition, readers, format, stylishness, opinions, issues, themes, disposition, scenery, and framework.

Consequently, librarians need to be sufficiently media literate to understand the history, makeup, and workings of the media in order to comprehend and take part in conversations about the information that is supplied by media irrespective of format. This infers that library employees must possess a range of analytical abilities in order to interact with both print and audiovisual items in ways that will benefit end users.

University Library service: The concept of library and information service delivery is fundamental to libraries, because they are procedures and actions that are put by libraries to bring assistance to users. Library service are all actions or responsibilities taken by library employees to ensure that the institution's aims and objectives are met. Any service provided by library employees to patrons, whether directly or indirectly, is referred to as service delivery and is provided in various departments or units of the library. To meet the various information needs of users, university libraries offer a range of library and information services. According to Agah and Omekwu[16], services refer to various offers made available to users by libraries. These include all services rendered to users at any point of need in the library. Library service is a means put in place to ensure that functions and activities carried out by libraries are transmitted by library staff to the library users. Global, I.G. publishers[17] views library and information services as provisions from the library to users. Services delivery are the assistance rendered by the librarians to users to enable them make good use of the library resources without spending much time. Services delivery has been identified as key indices for user's patronage of libraries. This is regarded as social services which are bound to stimulate the reading habit of the library clientele.

According to Lawal-Solarin[18], library services are activities or functions provided by the library to the users. These authors added that this can include instruction on how to access and use the library materials. Library services can be differentiated by types of libraries and departments of the libraries. Generally, library services in a university library can be classified under the following: reference, circulation, technical, serial and online services. These services are classified according to the various

departments available in the library. Each of the departmental services has specified services carried out on regular basis. Specific services are charging and discharging; user education; research assistance; current awareness services (CAS); selective dissemination of information (SDI); repackaging services; reprographic services; resource sharing; records keeping; marketing; maintenance.

Methodology

The ex-post facto research design was adopted for this study. This study design primarily examines events after they have already occurred; as a result, it employs available data for confirmatory purposes. This study was conducted in Federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. However, the study focused on three out of six Federal University libraries, being libraries in University of Uyo, University of Calabar and University of Benin. The region covered is part of the coastal Niger-delta oil rich region of the country. The population of the study consisted 271 respondents (68 professionals and 203 para-professional librarians) in universities of Uyo, Calabar and Benin. Total sampling technique was used to sample 271 respondents.

The researcher developed an instrument entitled "Communication and Analytical Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)" for data collection. The researcher with the help of research assistants administered copies of the questionnaire to respondents in the selected universities. However, after the administration of the instrument, only 179 copies of questionnaire were useful for data analysis. The obtained data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and dependent t-Test to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and discussion

The results are presented by answering and testing of research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One: How does communication skill influence service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria?

The result in Table-1 reveals the mean range for the response on how communicative skill influences library staff service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria. All the items are above the cutoff point of 2.50 which means the aforementioned communication skills enable librarians in communicating messages for different audiences and purposes to meet users need.

Research Question two: How does analytical skill influence service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria?

Table-1: Summary of how communication skill influences library staff service delivery in Federal University Libraries of South-South Nigeria (n = 179).

Items Communication skill entails the following:	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Decision
Creating media messages for users	51	65	42	21	3.4043	.58366	Agree
Computer-mediated communication to users	72	57	35	15	3.2562	.69882	Agree
Interactions between librarians and users	83	59	27	10	3.2006	.67682	Agree
Content selection of media messages	45	97	21	16	3.3488	.65267	Agree
Editing of media content	78	44	22	35	3.4506	.66818	Agree
Repackaging of media content to meet users need	66	47	32	34	3.5031	.67001	S A
Using technologies that allow instant interaction	51	63	42	23	3.3025	.64014	Agree
Communicating media messages for different audiences and purposes	42	96	23	18	3.3025	.78365	Agree
Listening carefully to users questions	81	33	16	49	3.2006	.50984	Agree
Responding to feedbacks	109	32	25	13	3.2531	.76948	Agree
Cluster mean					3.3222	.66533	Agree

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree.
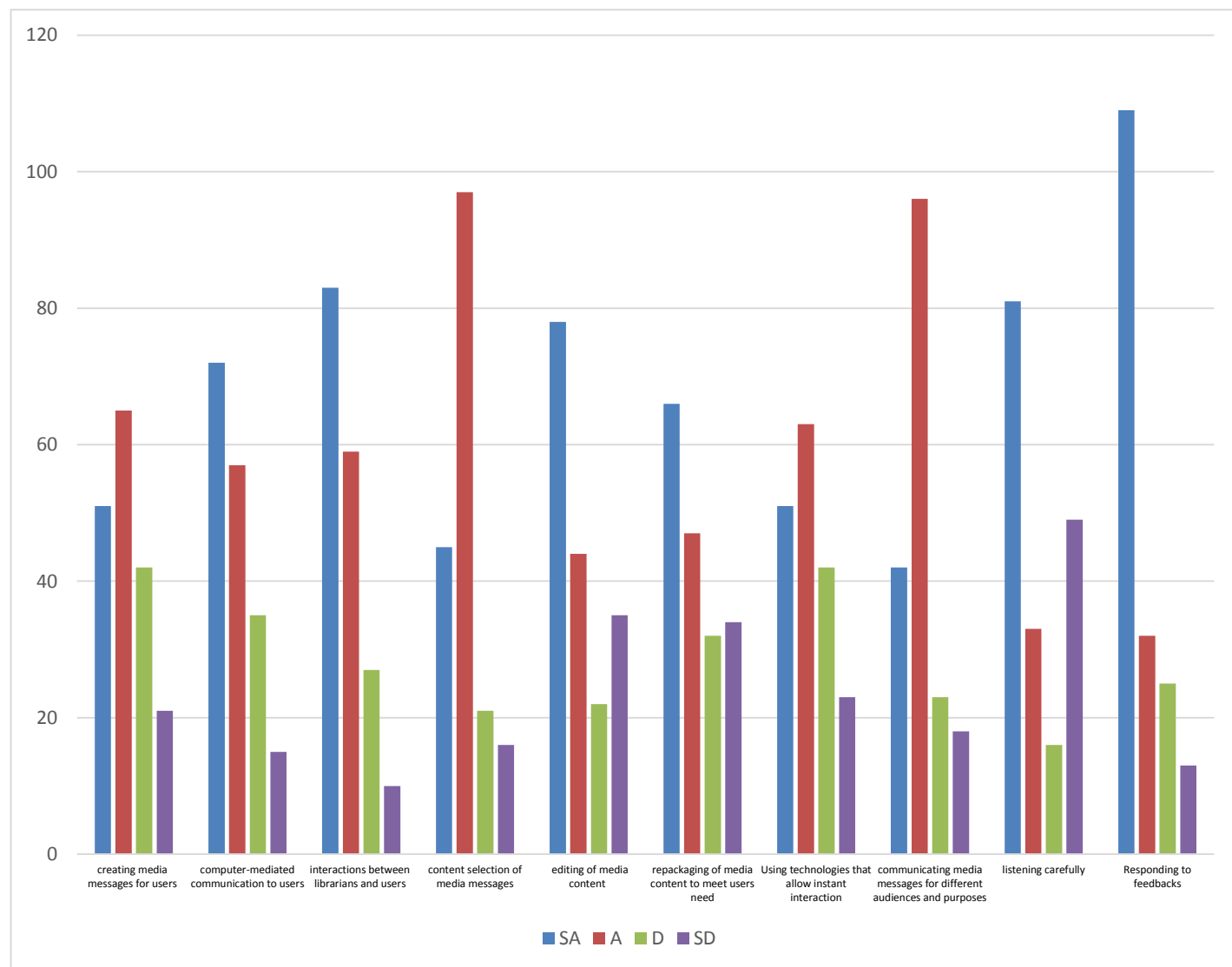

Figure-1: Communication skill and service delivery.

Table-2: Summary of how analytical skill influences library staff service delivery in Federal University Libraries of South-South Nigeria (n = 179).

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Decision
	Analytical skill entails the following:							
1	The ability to analyse symbolic texts	102	42	26	9	3.4506	.58941	A
2	Ability to assess media contents for users' satisfaction	91	56	18	4	3.6049	.58206	SA
3	Ability to examine responses from users	89	74	10	6	3.5556	.58885	SA
4	Verifying media intent	70	85	16	8	3.3519	.47829	A
5	Questioning media contents	69	82	17	11	3.1019	.76624	A
6	Interpreting the media for the benefit of the users	71	48	32	28	3.6543	.65194	SA
7	Examining media materials and services	46	94	26	13	3.3025	.71334	A
8	Understanding the authorship and audience of a media tool	63	83	24	9	3.2531	.76544	A
9	Being knowledgeable about media tools	115	32	14	18	3.2068	.67952	A
10	Being aware of the implicit messages of media materials	83	46	32	18	3.0586	.67206	A
	Cluster mean					3.3540	.64871	

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree.
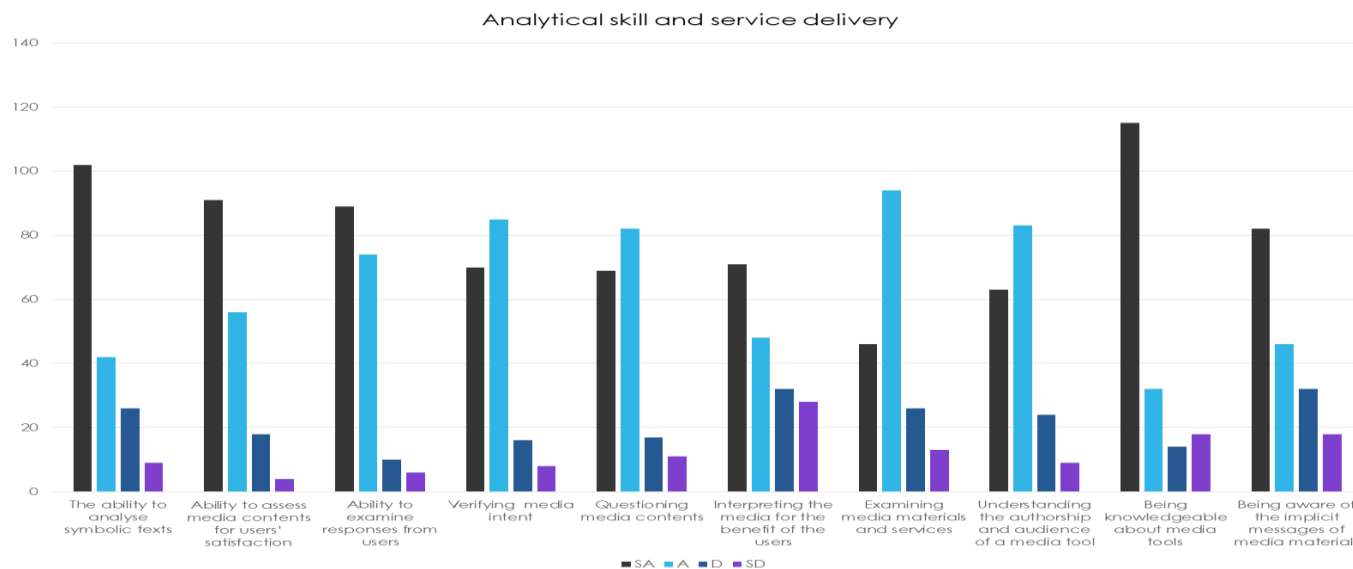

Figure-2: Analytical Skill and service delivery.

The result in Table-2 reveals the mean range for the response on how analytical skill influences library staff service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria. All the items are above the cutoff point of 2.50 which means that the above analytical skills enable librarians to be knowledgeable about media tools thereby influencing service delivery.

Testing of Hypotheses: Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of communication skill on service delivery in Federal university libraries of South-South Nigeria.

The result in Table-3 showed a calculated t-value of 17.669 and table value of 1.98 at a significant level of 0.05. Since the

calculated value of 17.669 is greater than the critical value found in the t-table (**1.98**), the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of communicative skill on library staff service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria, is rejected. This implies that communication skill has a significant influence on library services in Federal university libraries of South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of analytical skill on library staff service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria.

Table-3: The Result of t-Test analysis for the influence of communicative skill on library staff service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-cal	t-crit	df	Decision
Communication	179	3.4043	.66312	.03684				
					17.66	1.98	177	significant
Library Service	179	2.6080	.74072	.04115				

Table-4: The Result of t-Test analysis of the influence of analytical skill on library staff service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-cal	t-crit	df	Decision
Analytical	179	3.3549	.57336	.03185				
					16.172	1.98	177	significant
Library service	179	2.6080	.74072	.04115				

The result in Table-4 showed a calculated t-value of 16.17 and table value of 1.98 at a significant level of 0.05. Since the calculated value of 16.17 is greater than the critical value found in the t-table (1.98), the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of analytical skill on library staff service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria, is rejected. Thus, this implies that analytical skill has a significant influence on library services in Federal university libraries of South-South Nigeria.

Discussion of findings: The findings of the study are discussed below.

Influence of communication skill on library staff service delivery: The finding in Table-1 (research question) and 3 (hypothesis) revealed that communication skill has a significant influence on library staff service delivery. The result is evident, as library staff engage in communication with users to ascertain their needs and thereby meeting the needs using media contents available and accessible in the library.

The finding is supported by Aghaei *et al.*[19] who observed that library managers' communication skills have a significant effect on their job satisfaction. Moreover, effective communication between managers and employees leads to the provision of high-quality services and a better understanding of the tasks assigned to the employees. On this note, the findings of this study maintains that communication skill has a significant influence on library staff service delivery in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

Influence of Analytical skill on library staff service delivery: The analysis of data in Table-2 (research question) and 4 (hypothesis) revealed that analytical skill has a significant

influence on library staff service delivery in Federal University libraries of South-South Nigeria. The result is evident as librarians usually employs analytical skill in collection development process, which positively influence service delivery in university libraries especially in making qualitative information resources available to users.

The finding supports Yulina *et al.*[20] who observed that ability in specifying, generalizing, and analysing errors has a significant influence on academic performance of students. Thus, the role of lecturers and material significance is an aspect that must be developed to improve analytical thinking skills in the learning process. Based on the result, analytical skill has a significant influence on service delivery.

Conclusion

The ability to analyse and communicate information in a variety of formats, both print and non-print is a significant factor in information service delivery as revealed in the study. This is because, the library is growing up in a world saturated with media messages. By using these skills appropriately, librarians develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of media both print and non-print, the techniques used by them (librarians) and the impact of these techniques.

Recommendation: The following are the recommendations made in the light of the findings of the study: i. Librarians should maintain the skill to analyse messages in a variety of forms to ascertain the quality and credibility of the content. ii. The skill of creating content in a variety of forms, making use of language, images, sound and new digital tools appropriate to users' needs, should be frequent task to maintain quality service.

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