

Relevance and Use of News Bulletin in Public Information Dissemination within Academic Communities: A Case Study of Three Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study focuses on the relevance and use of news bulletin in public information dissemination within academic communities. Three Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria were selected for the study. A total of 500 copies of questionnaires were distributed but only 432 copies were returned for analysis. The study utilized factor analysis to extract major factors that promote the use of the medium in public information dissemination within the community. The findings revealed that almost all respondents see news bulletin as a good means of communication and collaboration and the major factors that promote its uses in the community are utility, worthiness, credibility and consistency. However, a good number of them believed that it does not give room for feedback. In conclusion, the study recommends that management should correct the paucities in the production and distribution systems of the medium in reporting current happenings in the community at regular intervals.

Keywords: Information dissemination, News bulletin, Academic community, Communication, Tertiary institutions.

1. Introduction

Information has been and would continue to play a vital role in any community development and growth. Gilbert and deWatteville (2000) opined that information is whatever is capable of causing a human mind to change its opinion about the current state of real world. The conceptions of information presupposed that it is a strategic resource and tool that all living beings regardless of their categories, communities, societies and nations need to have access to and utilise at all times in order to develop and advance in any type of endeavour. Information is an indispensable factor of promoting generation hence should be disseminated to people (Ibrahim, 2012). If information has to be used, it must be disseminated (Orr, 2003). Therefore, information dissemination can be best described as a need which is essential like other basic needs of life. Free flow of information is a right of the people which enable them to participate effectively in the process of economic, social and political activities of the society in order to enhance education, knowledge and learning. (Echezona, 2007).

The free flow of information in an organization through an effective dissemination network does not only represents a necessary condition for a well informed citizenry (Ibrahim and Sanni, 2012) but also a central force which binds the different strata of an organisation together and makes it easy for their activities to be coordinated. Consequently, the periodic publication of an in-house journal called bulletin to inform members of staff of the main activities of the university is helpful. It requires systematic collection, organisation and storage of information relevant to the happenings of a community. Muhammad (1994) opines that information is a vital resource which provide impetus for a nation's social, political, cultural, spiritual, economic, scientific and technological advancement. Information should be disseminated in such a way that could ensure its free and equal accessibility by every member of a given society irrespective of racial, religious, and economic status of the recipient. There are usually good reasons why organisations decide to disseminate information. One of these reasons is to improve their knowledge base and subsequently make better, future situations. Other reasons for disseminating information include the following reasons.

1. To educate, explain, or promote a concept, process or principle.
2. To get feedback that might require further information.
3. To share knowledge and routes of communication among group of individuals.
4. To improve organisational knowledge base in other to make better judgement for the future.

There is a growing demand for schools to be accountable to high levels of educational administration as well as local stakeholders. Information dissemination is an important element in teaching and research around the world. Dissemination of information has transformed the conduct of research and teaching in institutions and organizations (Ikoro, 2005). This applies to education office at different levels including higher institutions. By actively sharing information, schools and other offices in the education system can bring education closer to their local communities in other to increase understanding, participation, and to mobilise support to encourage a communal sense of all. (UNESCO, 2011).

Effective communication of information throughout tertiary institutions like a university encourages good understanding among the university community as well as ensuring good relationship among the

stakeholders with whom communication can be difficult because of their remote location. According to Adedokun, Adeyemo, and Olorunsola (2010), the coming together of these people in a cooperative way presupposes that there must be effective communication between and among the people. A university community that lacks good channel of information, does not only expose its members to misgivings, confusions, misunderstandings of actions and motives but also breeds conflict, lack of cooperation and subsequently results in hostility. However, Iredia (2012) affirms that instituting and circulating a periodic report of an organisation for one week among members of staff underscores the inter-relatedness of all the functions in the organisations. Maintenance of a good social and working relationship involves constant change of ideas and interactions among people for the solution of their problems, therefore, effective dissemination of information is an essential prerequisite for every aspect of communal functions. To this end, provision of information is obligatory in a university setting to create awareness, keep people vibrant and informed of track of activities within the community.

While, information is disseminated through a multitude of methods depending on the target group one is interested in (Cartnell, Orr and Kelemen 2006); research has shown that people use different sources depending on the kind of information they are seeking. The study of Phipps, Murphy, Maddox and Neas (2001) showed that family, friends, newsletters, factsheets, magazines, articles, printed sales materials and bulletin are mostly used as means of information dissemination. Iredia (2012) defined Bulletin as a type of in-house journal through which activities concerning an organisation are distributed. It is meant to inform workers about the various activities going on in their place of work. While WorldNet 3.0 defines bulletin as a short announcement concerning some on-going news or story, bulletins are produced as a means of communication. Moreover, Ingram and Estate (2008) opined that certain principles come to the fore in determining what to include in News Bulletin. These are:

1. Writing stories in the form of a script
2. Taking voice reports from journals
3. Recording the sound of someone speaking.

2. Statement of the Problem

University is an educational institution of higher learning whose main objectives are teaching, research and community service. It comprises of several strata such as the undergraduates, graduates, scientists, professionals, technicians, alumni, and a prevalence of divergent interests often fractured by conflicts and rifts. Therefore, the issue of cordial relationships among the many stakeholders in the university community bothers on information dissemination and comprehension. This quality underpins the import of relevance of news bulletin within academic communities as a means of promoting interaction and enhancing institutional output. Hence information dissemination plays a significant role in facilitating cordial relationships among the various members of the university community. Provision of information among the strata components of the university community is needed to create awareness, educate and inform the entire workforce/stakeholders of the university about the diverse activities and programs the institution engages in. Information glues the various components of the university for the enhancement of a smooth, coordinated and functioning community. Information is carried out through various means; however the use of News Bulletin is very popular because of its wider circulation among stakeholders. The quantum of resources spent in producing the Bulletin weekly coupled with the publicity given to it make one wants to know if the production of the Bulletin serves the purpose for which it is intended. Various studies have been carried out on information dissemination but no study has been made on the news bulletin as a means of communication in the university community. This study therefore, seeks to investigate the relevance and use of News Bulletin in public information dissemination among three academic communities.

2.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To find out if the circulation of the news in the bulletin has created awareness about the activities that go on in the academic institutions;
2. To determine the perception of people on the news circulated through the news bulletin;
3. To determine the critical factors that promote the use of news bulletin as a tool of information dissemination within the academic communities; and
4. To determine the format preference of the news bulletin in disseminating information within the academic community.

2.2 Research Questions

1. Has the circulation of the news in the bulletin created awareness of the activities going on in academic institutions?
2. Are people informed through the news bulletin?

3. What are the perceptions of people on the news circulated through the news bulletin?

2.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the use of News Bulletin and the factors promoting its usage in the dissemination of information among academic communities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

2.4. Scope of the Study

This research work was a survey to determine the relevance and usage of News Bulletin using three Universities in Ogun State. These included Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB); Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, (OOU) and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu Ode (TASUED).

2.5 Significance of the Study

2.5.1 To provide the basis for News Bulletin adoption in the dissemination of institution's information.

2.5.2 To establish the existing gaps in the adoption of News Bulletin as a tool for disseminating the activities of institution's administration.

2.5.3 The output of this research will serve as a blueprint for the universities and other academic environment to chart the right course of action towards the production and use of News Bulletin.

3. Methodology

The research design used for this study was descriptive. The population of the study was academic staff and senior non-teaching staff of the three public universities in Ogun state. The main research instrument used to gather data for this study was a questionnaire tagged "The Relevance and Use of News Bulletin in Public Information Dissemination among Academic Communities: A Case Study of Three Universities in Ogun State". The section A of the questionnaire sought information about demographic factors of the respondents like gender, name of institution, level of education, no of years of staff, and staff category i.e. Academic or senior non-teaching. While section B of the questionnaire sought for information on the place of News Bulletin as a means of public information dissemination. The method of data analysis used for this study was descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean, and standard deviation, factor analysis using exploratory principal component analysis and factorial analysis to identify the underlying factors to the study. This method was adopted for two reasons, firstly; it does not impose specific pattern on data in a prior manner but it provides an opportunity to identify a substantive factor's inclusion; secondly, no previous study has been conducted in determining the relevance of News Bulletin in information dissemination in academic environment, hence, the use of exploratory factorial analysis was adopted. Furthermore, principal component chart was used to show the pattern of the preferred format of News Bulletin i.e. electronic or hardcopy in relation to the level of education, sex, and years of experience. Over all, the statistical package for social science (SPSS) was employed for this study.

4. Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Table 1 shows the distribution of demographic characteristics of the respondents, 114 (57.0%) were males and 86 (43.0 %) were females. Analysis of respondents by institutions indicated that 110 respondents (55.0 %) were from Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and the remaining 45.0 % (90 respondents) were from the two Universities owned by the State government. These results affirmed the leading nature of the Federal government owned universities in terms of personnel recruitment. This is also supported by the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) report of 2013 as quoted by Akaeze, (2014) and Aghedo & Ogbeide (2016).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Institutions		
Federal University of Agriculture (FUNAAB)	110	55.0
Olabisi Onabanjo University(OOU)	40	20.0
TaiSolarinUniversity of Education(TASUED)	50	25.0
Total	200	100.0
Gender		
Female	86	43.0
Male	114	57.0
Total	200	100.0
Educational Level		
WASCE	4	2.0
OND/Diploma	17	8.5
NCE	12	6.0
B.Sc./B. Ed	96	48.0
M.Sc./MLS	58	29.0
PhD	13	6.5
Total	200	100.0
Years of Experience		
1 -5 years	31	15.5
6 – 10 years	77	38.5
11 – 15 years	56	28.0
16 – 20 years	14	7.0
21 – 25 years	7	3.5
26 years+	15	7.5
Total	200	100.0
Category of Staff		
Junior Non-Teaching	10	5.0
Senior Non-Teaching	129	64.5
Teaching/Academic	61	30.5
Total	200	100.0

Majority of the respondents had university degrees 167 (83.5 %), while the remaining 33 respondents had qualifications below university degrees. One could deduce that the studied subjects (i.e. the universities communities) have qualified and enlightened members of staff that could easily determine the worth of News Bulletin in their communities. The years of experience of the respondents revealed that majority of them 108 (54.0 %) have spent 10 years or less, and 92 (46%) have spent 10 years or more in the service. This implies that majority of the respondents are still in their productive years and they still have more time to spend in their various universities communities. Also, majority of the respondents 129 (64.5 %) were non-teaching senior staff; 61 (30.5%) were teaching/academic staff, while the last category 10 (5.0%) were junior non-teaching staff.

Research Question 1: What is the level of use of News Bulletin in creating awareness of activities in the academic institutions?

The ranking level of use of News Bulletin in creating awareness on all activities going on in the academic community is depicted in table 2.

Table2: Levels of Use of News Bulletin in Creating Activities' Awareness

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
It creates awareness on institutional policy	2.97	.860	198
Information provides is current	3.04	.830	198
Information is dependable	2.97	.773	198
information eliminates rumour mongering	2.63	.982	198
information in NB is objective	3.07	2.265	198
information prevents grave vine	2.80	.905	198
Information is timely	2.83	.819	198
Information is useable	3.17	.689	198
Captures information on all activities	2.72	.971	198
Source of institution collaboration	3.33	.668	198
Route of Communication	3.53	.501	198
Gives room for feedback	2.46	.948	198
Carries genuine information	3.34	.640	198
Medium of knowledge sharing	3.32	.731	198

Almost all the respondents believed that News Bulletin (NB) is a very good means of communication in their academic communities (\bar{X} = 3.53, SD=0.501); majority of them thought that News Bulletin carried genuine information in the community (X =3.34, SD= 0.64). Also, it is a good means of collaboration (X =3.33, SD=0.67) and knowledge sharing within the communities. While a good number of them agreed that the information through the source is current (X = 3.07, SD= 0.83) and highly objective (X = 3.07, SD=2.23), it rarely gives room for feedback (X = 2.46, SD=0.95). This implies that majority of the respondents were highly aware that news, that is, current innovative and creative information within the academic communities can be quickly disseminated through the Bulletin, though its objectivity and feedback mechanism is low.

Research Question 2: What is/are the major perception(s) of the academic community towards the information disseminated through the News Bulletin?

The major perception of the respondents towards the information disseminated through News Bulletin was obtained from Principal Component Analysis. The measure of Sampling Adequacy, Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was 0.688 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, λ^2 (N(198)= 894.528, df=91, <0.000), table 3. This indicates that the sample and the correlation matrix were appropriate. Three components were extracted through parallel analysis and the results were represented in Table 4.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test of sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.688
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	694.528
	Df	91
	Sig.	.000

Table 4: Component Matrices of the Principal Component Analysis

	Components		
	1	2	3
Creates awareness on institutional policy	.670	.157	-.021
Information is dependable	.653	-.253	-.374
Information is useable	.594	-.242	-.265
Captures information on all activities	.559	.219	-.348
Gives room for feedback	.503	.343	-.137
Carries genuine information	.489	.468	-.112
Information is timely	.469	.121	-.277
Information eliminates rumour mongering	.527	-.588	.226
Source of institution collaboration	.324	.571	.129
Information prevents grave vine	.470	-.554	.265
Information is current	.447	-.498	.085
Route of Communication	.394	.076	.712
Medium of knowledge sharing	.476	.412	.524
Information in NB is objective	.040	.134	.243

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 3 components extracted.

From table 4 above, the major perception of the respondents towards the information disseminated through the Bulletin tends towards utility and consistency. The first component correlates strongly with 'creation of awareness on institutional policy' (0.67); 'the information is dependable (0.65) and useable' (0.59.); and 'it captures information on all activities in the communities'. By the second component, an increasing use of information in News Bulletin tends to decrease rumour mongering and prevention of grave vine. Thus, the corresponding communities have high value for the utility, worthiness and consistency of the information in the News Bulletin.

Research Question 3: What are the differences in factor structure among the groups in the academic community in determining the use of News Bulletin to disseminate information?

Factor structure of the variables between groups in academic community as regards to information disseminated through News Bulletin could be observed from Exploratory Factorial Analysis. This method involves three stages: (1) preparation of a correlation matrix; (2) extraction of initial factors: and (3) rotation of the factors to terminal solution. This method was adopted because it does not impose a specific pattern on the data in a priori manner, but it provides an opportunity to identify a factor's inclusion substantially. Since no previous study has been conducted in determining the relevance of News Bulletin in information dissemination in academic environment, the exploratory factorial Analysis seems essential to identify and interpret the common factors underlying the respondents' reasons. After the preliminary confirmations of the appropriateness of the method (table3) and the extraction of appropriate factors (table4); the extracted factors were subjected to factor rotation using Varimax. Factor loading less than 0.5 do not present substantive value in factor rotation and should hence be removed (Cohen, *et al* 2009). On 4 iterations, three interpretable factors returned as shown in table 5.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrices of the Factors

	Components		
	1	2	3
Information prevents grapevine	.906	.069	.034
Information eliminates rumour mongering	.830	.082	.261
Medium of knowledge sharing	-.093	.885	.136
Route of Communication	.284	.822	-.092
Information is dependable	.191	.035	.963

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Table 6: Total Variance Explained By Rotated factors

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Loadings			Sums of Squared Rotation Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.001	40.024	40.024	2.001	40.024	40.024	1.635	32.693	32.693
2	1.298	25.965	65.989	1.298	25.965	65.989	1.471	29.421	62.113
3	.830	16.600	82.590	.830	16.600	82.590	1.024	20.476	82.590
4	.493	9.865	92.454						
5	.377	7.546	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

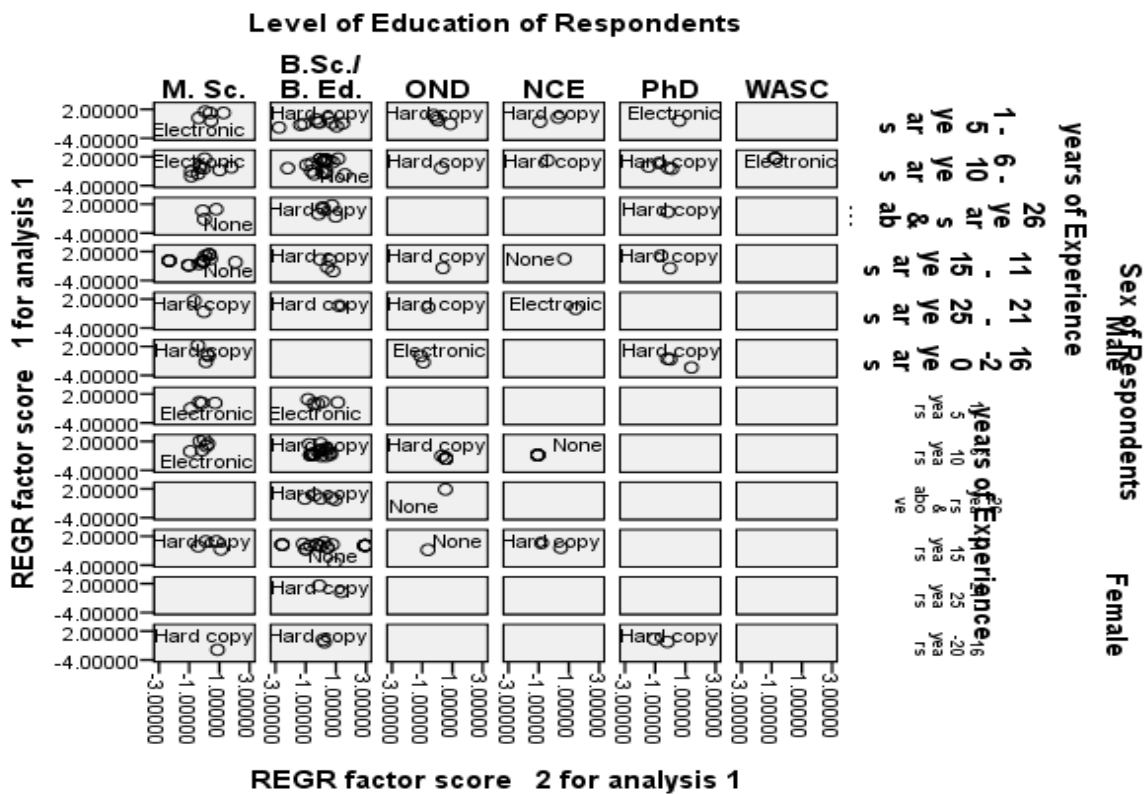
From table 6, the three interpretable factors accounted for 32.7 %; 29.4 %; and 20.5 % of the variance in the data, totaling 82.6 % of the total variance. This implies that these three factors explained more than 80 % of the variability caused by the 14 factors originally proposed to determine the relevance of News Bulletin in information dissemination in academic community. From table 5, factor 1 is labelled utility in terms of change of attitude, consisting of two indicators labelled: ‘information prevents grave vine (0.906)’ and ‘information eliminates rumour mongering (0.830)’. This factor which has the highest percentage of explained variance implies that the utility of the information in bringing about change of attitude in the future career and everyday life of the respondents in the academic community has been regarded as the essential reason for their use. Factor 2 is labelled: ‘increase in knowledge on a particular issue’ which consists of another two indicators ‘medium of knowledge sharing (0.885) and ‘route of communication (0.822).

Factor 3 is labelled: ‘consistency of the source’, which consists of a single indicator ‘information is dependable (0.913). Therefore, it is likely that ability of the source (News Bulletin) to promote change of attitude, increase knowledge level, and its consistency would make the community to uphold its source.

Research Question 4: What are the format preferences of the News Bulletin in information dissemination among the university communities?

The Format preferences of the News Bulletin in disseminating information among the university communities can be visualised by using the Principal Component Scatter Plot. The results are shown in the graph below.

From the graph, the Format preference demonstrated by the respondents could be inferred as joint functions of their years of experience and their levels of education, but not a function of their gender. As the years of experience and levels of education increase, the tendency to prefer hard copy increases; this implies that those respondents with lower years of experience preferred electronic format to hard copy. These results corroborate Castano-Munoz’s (2010) observations that age variables i.e. years of experience; length of training; level of education; and so on, play major roles in innovativeness. Younger individuals prefer to use electronic resources than the older ones. However and generally, majority of the respondents preferred the hard copy (i.e. the number of boxes with hard copy in both males and females respondents) to the electronic copy, it could be inferred that majority of the respondents are experienced members of staff of these academic communities.



b. Discussion

This study contributes to the growing body of literature that examines the prominent factors, which identified News Bulletin as a credible means of public information dissemination in academic environment. The results of this study revealed that majority of the university staff in these institutions were aware that News Bulletin can swiftly disseminate current, innovative, and creative information that could keep them well informed; however, they frowned at the lack of feedback in the news mechanism. These results corroborate the findings of Duggan and Banwell (2004) which opined that individual’s needs for knowledge and awareness of the source of the knowledge are key concepts in information dissemination in any community.

Besides, finding of this study suggest utility (i.e. the usefulness of the content of the News Bulletin), trustworthiness and consistency of production are the major factors that stimulate acceptance of News Bulletin as a source of circulating information in the academic environment. These findings extend Hungbo’s (2007) observations that good and credible news from any given source should not only circulate quickly after events, or be of wide interest to the people, or contain information that is useful in reaching decisions, but also, the source should be trustworthy, fair, accurate and dependable. The findings of this study further provide additional attribute that may be peculiar to News Bulletin in academic environment or extends to public information dissemination channels in that it conveys importance to the rate at which the information is disseminated. This suggests regularity as another factor that makes the importance of News Bulletin relevant to members of staff in academic community. Similarly, the results of this study are in agreement with a study by Castano-munoz (2010) that the use of different formats of the News Bulletin by the staff in academic environment is affected by the educational level and years of experience of the staff, but not by gender of the staff.

Information is medium dependent, therefore, should be packaged in a particular Format to be communicated to individuals and unless the individual knows how to apply the Format, the information will remain inaccessible and rendered useless. Although, majority of the respondents preferred Hardcopy, producing News Bulletin in both Formats could improve its accessibility and utility. Furthermore, the findings of this study have implications for appraising the value of the News Bulletin in academic communities, the medium should not be scrapped because of its inherent cognizance values as demonstrated by the high number of staff using the medium to avail themselves of current information and innovative activities in their communities, rather university management should correct deficiencies in the production and distribution of the medium in these communities. The amendment could promote the utility, worthiness, credibility, and consistency of the medium in reporting current information at regular intervals to the university community; such that they would not have to search elsewhere before taking decision on activities in their campuses.

From this study, one can deduce that News Bulletin being a print media does not require academic qualification of university members to remain relevant as a medium of information dissemination because its contents are simple to read and understand, nonetheless, its consistency is vital for sustenance of its relevance. However, this is an empirical study, qualitative study can be conducted to ascertain the importance of consistency in disseminating information among staff in academic communities using News Bulletin. Also, the study used academic communities in Ogun state. The study can be expanded using other communities in different geo-political zones in Nigeria. Thus, further study is not impossible in these contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that members of academic communities are aware of the relevance of News Bulletin in disseminating current information and updating their knowledge on innovative activities within their communities. The level of usage of the medium, though it rarely gives room for feedback, justified the cost expended on its production and distribution. Also, the study revealed that the major factors necessitating its utility are information authenticity, grapevine curtailment, worthiness, and consistency in its production. Moreover, majority of the staff preferred Hardcopy to electronic copy.

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