Does Availability Determine Use? A Case Study of Undergraduates at the Federal University Lokoja

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Abstract

The research was set to shed light on the utilization of the library and its numerous resources based on the responses of undergrad users at the Federal University Lokoja (FUL) Library. A quantitative research methodology and a survey research design were used to analyze the four research questions posed for this study. The population comprised all registered Library users, and a structured questionnaire served as the research instrument for the study. Sampled responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods with tables and graphs. The study revealed that students' use of Information Resources in the library was mainly for Assignments/Reading, Examinations, and Project writing. Challenges that hinder the effective utilization of information resources are the attitude of librarians and the information literacy/orientation of students finally, increased utilization can be achieved through target-driven literacy and orientation programs alongside the provision of adequate information resources. The study buttressed the use strategy of Federal University Library Lokoja from the perspective of library users, which gives its novelty. The study has also shed light on possible issues that hinder the optimal use of resources. Finally, the study highlights building better librarians and library environs through literacy programs, training, and reengineering library spaces to cater to other activities like entertainment and fun to improve library use and orient clientele's behaviour.

Keywords: Library Use, University Libraries, Information resources,. Undergraduates

Introduction

The basic function of any university is to conserve and transmit existing knowledge through teaching and create new knowledge through research. According to Omotundes, et al. (2014) universities are to generate new knowledge and encourage transformation and adoption of innovation. Since this requires an atmosphere of research, libraries must provide access to relevant information resources to their users, empowering and enriching their minds, thus pushing the frontiers of knowledge and research. Barfi, Afful-Authur& Agyapong (2013) defined library information resources as the raw materials that provide vital services in the teaching and learning process. The library acquires these resources to meet the information needs of the academic community. The library is incomplete without these; their major goal is organizing the acquired resources and making them available for optimal utilization by their patrons. The task requires the capacity to discern library users' diverse needs to give faculty and students information resources for learning, teaching, research, and career development purposes (Ramaaiah 2010).

Utilization depends on the availability of information resources accessible to the university community. Granting access to library information resources requires a series of protocols, cataloguing, classification, and indexing, to ensure that users can identify and locate the resources. Anyanwu (2015) posits that the value of a library collection lies in its effective utilization by the user community. Okiki (2013) further affirmed that it is the hub of all academic activities established to improve intellectual excellence. A library can only be regarded as a hub of all academic activities when there are adequate library resources like print and not print resources that are well utilized. The worth and impact of a library can only be felt through the utilization of the various resources acquired by the library. It is also important for libraries to consider users' needs during acquiring information resources to maintain relevance (Aguolu&Aguolu, 2015). Similarly, Onye (2016) observed that the objectives of a library may not be realizable unless its resources reach optical capacity and are used by faculty and students who depend on its information resources for different purposes. To ascertain the library's true worth in the 21st century as the gateway to information, this study analyses utilization strategies of the Federal University Library (FUL) and its resources, based wholly on the responses of undergrad users.

Problem Statement

The availability of any information resource has a direct influence on its use (Mates, 2012; Odigie, Bako, &Abdulsallam, 2020). Therefore, libraries go to a great extent to avail their clientele of the necessary information resources. "Necessary" due to a paucity of funds which many libraries suffer; therefore, from these finite resources, the library must decide what it can purchase while trying to meet the objective for which it was established. This process is carried out at various levels within the library but mainly rests on the desk of the collection development unit/university librarian, they determine the materials for acquisition and usage. Researchers have identified means of asserting usage of library resources to be library user statistics and surveys (Zhixian, 2016, Association of Research Libraries, 2020). Gratifications for having these information resources readily available, accessible, and usable are known and documented by

researchers. However, library resources are still not optimally used as only a small percentage of the general student population in most of the higher institutions in Nigeria utilize a library (Mohammed, 2017, Aladeet al., 2014). Therefore, this research seeks to assess student user opinion from within the library to ascertain strategies and solutions to improve the usage of resources in the library.

Research Questions

1. What types of information resources are available at the FUL Library?

2. What are the major reasons students use information resources at the FUL Library?

3. What are the challenges hindering the effective utilization of the library information resources in FUL Library?

4. What strategies would enhance the utilization of available information resources by undergraduate students?

Literature Review

Library resources can be in physical or non-physical formats, including textbooks, journals, databases, the internet, cassettes, diskettes, and microforms. Ezeala and Yusuff (2011) highlighted other forms of library resources, such as Computers, Photocopying Machines, CD-ROM, Fax Machines, and Local Area Networks, for library users, which must be measured periodically by librarians to ensure that the resources and services of their libraries are meeting the set objectives of the library.

Availability of library resources means the presence and ease of locating and retrieving information from a library collection. Library users can only use information sources to which they have access to save time. Abdulsalami (2013) stated, "Book availability is an indicator of stock effectiveness". The library can be said to be a functioning one when it is properly stocked with the right information resources. Popoola (2001) argued that information availability does not mean accessibility and utilization. He suggested, among others, that academic libraries should stimulate immediate demands for their products and services. She added that people's expectations are high when sourcing and retrieving information. Hence frustration too is high when expectations are not met. She further suggested that human and material resources must be available for a library to satisfy users' needs.

For an effective learning process, learners must have access to necessary information, materials and resources. Academic libraries are built to support and encourage teaching, learning, and research by providing resources. These resources might be intangible (i.e., printed resources) and intangible (i.e., electronic resources) formats. Barfi, Afful-Authur, and Agyapong (2017) affirmed that the availability of library resources creates an enabling environment for the utilization of library resources, and this will provide teaching and learning. A successful educational system depends exhaustively on the accessibility and utilization of information sources and services (Ntui, Inyang, &Enang, 2015). In a related study, Okafor (2010) carried out a study on the availability and accessibility of library resources for effective library service

delivery in Federal University Libraries. The aim was to ascertain the types of resources available and services offered with the use of the resources and the extent of contributions to the resources in the libraries. The findings show that the various services offered with library resources have contributed to the qualitative services delivery in the libraries.

Amusa &Iyoro (2013) observed in their study that many students (60%) used library resources to study, read, and research. Bako and Odigie (2020) indicated that most undergraduate students use the university library information resources for educational activities relating to their courses. Foloruso &Njoku's (2016) study further shows that the most prominent purpose of using library resources was to study and read for examinations. Many of the students also use the library to search for materials for assignments and to do research work, as well as to read the newspaper or participate in a group discussion.

One of the most important collections in the library is books; this is evident as sixty percent of library holdings are books in print and electronic form. Nwachukwu, Abdulsalami, and Salami (2014), in their study on the Availability, Accessibility, and Use of Information Resources and Services Among Information Seekers of Lafia Public Library in Nasarawa State, revealed that books are the most available sources of information in Lafia Public Library. This is supported by findings from the study by Danlami& Ahmed (2019) on the Availability and Use of Information Resources and Services in Bauchi State Public Library, which also revealed that books/journals are the major information resources in Bauchi State Public Library. Books contain vital academic information that enlightens and educate; hence students consult them in their studies. Aside from studying books, journals and reference materials, students utilize the library for recreational activities; the increase in the usage of a particular resource depends on the user's information needs. Aladeniyi &Owokole (2018), in their study, revealed the frequency at which students used library resources. Their findings show that they use library information resources very often 47 (17.9%). The analysis also shows that none of the respondents indicated they never used the library resources. Yabanet., Gbaje &Odigie (2020) investigated library visits at the Kashim Ibrahim Library, the found that dwindling library visits could be linked to librarian attitude and information resources available at the library. Furthermore, Oluwatobi, Ehiogbae, Aluko-Arowolo&Onasote's (2014) study indicated that the most frequently used library materials are online databases, followed by Dictionaries, books, and encyclopaedia, which are used daily, while the least used materials are CD-ROM.

On the challenges hindering the effective utilization of library information resources, the study by Barfi, Afful-Arthur &Agyupong (2018) indicated that the non involvement of lecturers in book selection, few up-to-date materials, users not informed of new arrivals, poor library instruction, unavailability of generators to power sockets and inadequate library staff are factors that hinder or impede the use of library materials by lecturers.Abdullahi, Ahmad & Ahmed (2019) also found in their study on the awareness and utilization of library resources in the Bauchi state college of agriculture library that more than half of the respondents 64% stated that the library has insufficient textbooks and up-to-date information resources which served as major hindrance being faced by the users in the utilization of the library resources, not aware of the available library information resources claimed by the users 57% and 97% of the respondents contributed to the challenges being faced by the users in the utilization of the library resources.

62% of respondents further noted that the library facilities were inadequate, which discouraged them from using the library. Okiki (2013) suggested that an awareness program on the availability of information resources in libraries should be given by librarians regularly to increase academics' level of awareness of information provided in the library, as this will enhance the research activities of academics.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research methodology and a survey research design, to investigate the availability and use of Information resources by undergraduates at the Federal University Lokoja Library. Kerlinger and Lee (2010) statedthat the method and design are best suited to offer solutions to issues relating to large populations, having various distributions and interrelated variables. The population of the study comprised all undergraduates who are registered users of the library. The population was randomly sampled for four (4) weeks using a structured questionnaire. The distribution of the questionnaire was done both within the library environs. A total of 167 responses were gathered for the study; however, only 150 amounting to approximately 90% of responses, were duly answered and utilized for the study. The data collected were analyzed with the use of charts and simple percentages.

Discussion of Findings

The findings present an analysis of the data gathered from the instrument. A total of 150 questionnaires were successfully filled and submitted; figure 1 below is an analysis of the response rate by departments sampled.
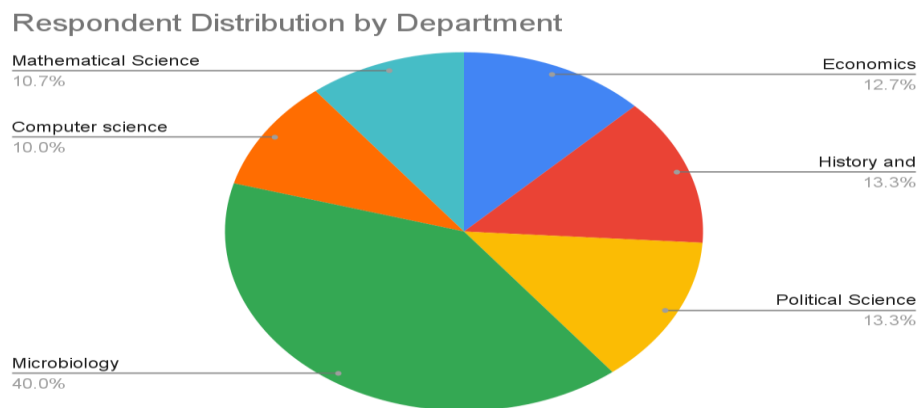

Respondent Distribution by Department

Mathematical Science 10.7%
Computer science 10.0%
Microbiology 40.0%
Economics 12.7%
History and 13.3%
Political Science 13.3%

Fig 1: Departmental Distribution of Respondents

The figure indicated that themajority of the respondents were drawn from the Department of Microbiology with a percentile rate of 40, while the lowest 10 percent came from Computer science. This implies that students studying Science-based courses utilized the library more. A cross-section of the respondents by their Gender was evaluated to highlight a proper understanding of the population, as shown in figure 2 below.
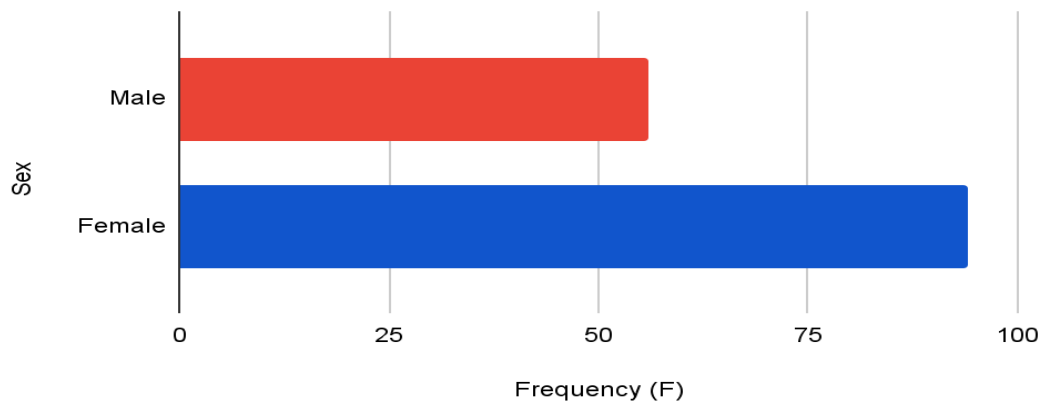
Gender distribution of respondents

Figure 2 above showed that most of the respondents were Females, with 94 responses against 56 Males. With such a huge disparity in population distribution, one could assert that more female clientele visited the library.

Types of Information Resources Available

The researchers investigated the availability of information resources by asking about some popular types of resources available at libraries. Figure 2 below highlights the findings from the questionnaire.

Types of Information Resources

Figure 3: Types of Information Resources available at FUL Library.

The chart showed that information resources such as Projects/Past Questions, Dictionaries, and Serial/Reports were in more supply than books, and the availability of the internet was less than that of books. From the chart, we can discern that certain information resources (books and the internet) necessary for running undergraduate programs in universities were available. The chart also indicated that information resources such as books and past questions might be a major

reason for visits to the library and the use of its information resources. This agrees with the findings of Nwachukwu, Abdulsalami, and Salami (2014) and Danlami and Ahmed (2019).

Research Question 2: Major Reasons for Use of Information Resources in the library

Reasons	SA	A	D	SD
Assignment/Reading	70	30	30	20
Leisure	7	20	53	70
Resting	20	15	90	25
Examination	131	8	7	4
Research/Project writing	90	36	15	9

Table 1: Reasons for Use of Information Resources in the Library

Information resources within any library environment are meant to be utilized; the researcher examined the purpose of guiding students' use of library resources. The reasons for library use were measured around the following purposes: Assignment/Reading, Leisure, Resting, Examination, and Research/Project. The study showed that a major use for information resources within the library was for Assignment/Reading, with 70 responses; examination purposes, with 131 responses; and Research/Project writing, with 90 responses. While reasons like Resting and Leisure did not seem to be major reasons for utilization of the library and its resources. Reasons such as Assignment/Reading and Examination purposes are in line with studies conducted by Amusa&Iyoro (2013) and Bako and Odigie (2020).

Research Question 3: What are the Challenges hindering the effective utilization of information resources in the FUL Library?

Challenges Hindering Effective Information Utilization	SA	A	D	SD
Attitude of Library staff	42	60	8	40
Lack of qualified personnel	9	40	61	40
Insufficient information resources	68	25	25	32
Information literacy level of students	65	30	5	50

Insufficient supply of electricity	9	62	68	11

Table 2: Challenges Hindering the Effective Utilization of Information Resources in FUL Library.

There are varied factors that could cause a challenge or hindrance to effective information resource utilization in libraries. The questionnaire highlighted four hindrances related to previous research in Nigeria. Table 2 shows some of the hindrances to effective information utilization as; Attitude of Library staff, Information Literacy, and Insufficient Information Resources. In contrast, the lack of qualified personnel and Electricity supply was not deemed a challenge or hindrance by students to effective information resource utilization. From the table, students highlighted the attitudes of librarians to be among the major challenges to the utilization of information resources within the library. This is in line with the views of Yabanet et al. (2020), who discovered the unfriendly behaviour of librarians to be a setback to their visiting the library environment. Other such hindrances were the information literacy levels of the students and insufficient resources within the library; the finding from the table is in line with Barfi, Afful-Arthur &Agyupong (2018) and Odigie et al. (2020), who discovered that library instruction/orientation and lack of relevant information resources to be an issue with the use of library resources by users (lecturers and students).

Research Question 4: Strategies for enhancing the utilization of information resources

Strategies for enhancing utilization of information resources	SA	A	D	SD
Literacy/Orientation should be given on the use of information resources	78	40	12	20
Qualified staff should be employed for library and information centre in the institution	31	42	43	34
Provision of adequate information resources	75	15	36	24
Necessary funds should be made available	56	39	21	34
Provision of electricity power supply	37	17	42	54

Table 3: Strategies for Enhancing the Utilization of Information Resources
Table 3 highlighted the strategies for enhancing the use of information resources, enhancing the use of information resources will invariably improve student academic output. The table shows that Orientation programs were an option that should be considered, especially regarding the availability of information resources in the library. Also, the provision of adequate information resources and necessary funding was another option highlighted to improve and enhance the use of information resources.

Summary of Findings

1. Information resources available at the Federal University Lokoja Library include Books, Projects/Past question papers, Dictionaries, Serials, and the Internet.
2. Major reasons for using information resources in the library were Assignments/Reading, Examinations, and Research Project writing.
3. Challenges that hinder the effective utilization of information resources were the attitude of librarians and the information literacy/orientation of students.
4. Increased utilization can be achieved through target-driven literacy and orientation programs and adequate information resources.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Availability and use are two terms often bundled in many Nigerian scholarly works. There exists a myriad of reasons for this. However, the research focused on availability and utilization from users' opinions at the Federal University Library Lokoja. It was revealed that under-utilization of library resources by students was a result of internal and external factors being; attitudinal changes in librarians and the literacy of users towards the library and its environment. Consequently, there is a need for all stakeholders of the library (university management, lecturers, and students) to be reoriented on the vast potential they stand to gain from an optimally utilized library. Based on the findings emanating from this study, it was recommended that the management of academic libraries should increase efforts towards creating awareness of the availability of library holdings through regular and efficient user orientation/literacy programs. Since it was found that students use the library for three major reasons, the library and others within Nigeria should investigate the expansion of their library grounds for other functions like entertainment, relaxation, and fun and not strictly educational as the library can serve a lot more functions. Finally, the attitude of library staff was indicated by the respondents as some of the factors that could cause a hindrance to effective information utilization in libraries. This can be addressed by the management of the library through further observations and training because library personnel have a huge influence on their users' library experiences.

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