

Patronage and Utilization of Information Resources at Pre-COVID-19 Pandemic Era in Northeast University Libraries of Nigeria

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Abstract

The regular assessment of the usage of library resources and services provides a solid platform for improvement and excellence. The study investigated the patronage and utilization of information resources by library users in Federal University libraries in North East, Nigeria. The study was conducted between July and November 2019. Undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and lecturers constituted the respondents of the study. The research adopted a survey design using 375 sample size. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Out of three hundred and seventy-five (375) questionnaires administered, 360 were retrieved and found usable for analysis. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that variation existed among the library users in terms of hours spent, frequency of usage, types of information resources used and purposes for which the libraries were utilized. To improve the level of patronage and utilization of information resources, the study recommended that all libraries under study should make their library stocks more current and easy to utilize to boost the level of patronage and utilization of their users.

Keywords: *Library Patronage, Library Utilization, Information Resources, University Libraries*

Introduction

University libraries are established to serve a range of clientele (Daramola, 2016), by providing information resources for teaching and learning (Quadri, *et al.*, 2014). A library is always expected to satisfy the information needs of its users by ensuring that books and current journals are made available. Libraries also need to make their environment conducive for research, learning and leisure (Olajide & Adio, 2017). Within the library environment,

installation of access points and Internet to facilitate utilization of digital information resources is very important and many libraries perform this role with financial resources available to them. In a situation where library users do not visit libraries, websites with links to online databases can be of great help (Daramola, 2016).

The level of patronage of library users and utilization of information resources in the libraries are a good measure of how well libraries can facilitate teaching, learning

and research activities. That is why it is essential to always observe and monitor library activities in terms of users' patronage and use of its resources. There are different levels of finding out the impacts of libraries on their users. The frequency of utilization, length of time that users spend while using the library, the category of information resources that users preferably use and the purposes for which they use the library and its resources are some among many ways of tracking the importance and impacts of libraries on their users. By function, the library is an organic institution that grows as its users increase in numbers and probably make regular use of its resources and services. This study aims to investigate the level of patronage and utilization of information resources in Federal University libraries in North East, Nigeria.

Literature Review

The concept of patronage has been treated by many scholars to refer to the regular visitation of users to the libraries' structures and utilization of its infrastructures to benefit from the information resources and services. It also means the consistent use of valuable information resources to satisfy their information needs and desires. Patronage of library clientele can provide minimal results if libraries do not provide the required quality, some category of information resources, maintain the resources and make access easy and flexible for users. It is also part of the roles of libraries to provide enabling environment to encourage their user communities to always patronize and utilize its available resources and services.

Therefore, low and high patronages of library users are influenced by the services and resources being provided by the library. Olajide and Adio (2017) stated that effective utilization of libraries' information resources and services is a demonstration of the usefulness of the library to its users.

Onanuga et al. (2017) shared their views that utilization refers to the level of use of libraries and their resources and services and how these resources or services impact usage. Parande *et al.* (2017) conceived that utilization can also be understood in terms of frequency of usage, type of resources and services being used, amount of time or hours being spent, and purposes of using the library. The utilization of libraries and their resources and services is one of the reasons why clientele patronize libraries. Utilization is mostly affected by the adequacy of resources in print and non-print formats, opening hours, and quality of services offered by libraries (Daramola, 2016). Onanuga *et al.* (2017) believe that if library users patronize libraries frequently, there is a high tendency that they would utilize information resources and service. Libraries are useful institution from where research can easily be carried out by consulting books, journals and other kinds of information resources.

Olajide and Adio (2017) believe that patronage and utilization of library resources encompass frequency of usage, time spent, resources used, service points used, browsing, reading or studying and others. Nweze and Shabi (2011) earlier reported that the frequency of use of libraries varies from one user to another,

which can be once a week, 2-3 or times a week. There is no specific number of times that library users devote to patronizing libraries. This is because different needs or factors determine the purpose and number of time or length of times that make library users patronize and utilize library resources. Many authors such as Nwezeh and Shabi (2011), Quadri *et al.* (2014); Daramola (2016); Olajide and Adio (2017) agreed that frequency of use is many a time related to the level of study of students in the university. Olajide and Adio (2017) stated that different users of libraries do not possess the same characteristics and that variation in users of libraries in an academic environment are tied to different levels and category of students. Adeniran (2011) observed that the quality of information resources attracts different users to the library, and that is related to the frequency of visits to the libraries. Adeniran (2011) also reported that studying and research accounted for 40.6% of the respondent's daily visits to the library and 4-5 times a week.

A study conducted by Hussaini *et al.* (2018) to determine the awareness and utilization of library resources by library users of NIMS Central Library, Jaipur India revealed the extent of use of information resources such as books/e-books (46, 88.4%), reference materials (36, 73.0%), Journal/e-journal (36, 69.2%) and Thesis/dissertation/Project (34, 65.3%). This study showed that books/e-books were used more than other information resources.

Onanuga *et al.* (2017) engaged 222 respondents to assess the library services utilization and satisfaction of

undergraduate students in Osun State University main library, Osogbo, Nigeria. They used a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The results of their study showed that the majority of the respondents used the library mainly to update their knowledge and skills 168 (76%), prepare for test and examination 156 (70%), read library materials 153 (69%), and lecture notes 141 (64%) respectively. The earlier study by Subair (2015) did not report the same findings. Contrary to other findings, the majority of the undergraduate students in Federal Universities in South-West, Nigeria used the library on daily basis for internet facility, photocopying, current awareness service and borrowing library materials. Therefore, the extent of patronage of library and utilization of information resources can vividly attest to the roles library play in the research, learning and teaching activity among students, lecturers and researchers. It also serves as a compass for library provisions and services. This study is to establish the peculiar patronage pattern of library users in Federal Universities in North-East Nigeria to strengthen management and services.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are set to be achieved in this study:

1. The frequency of utilization of the library by users.
2. The length of time users spends in the library by users.
3. The services of the library most frequently utilized by users.
4. The formats of information resources utilized by users.

5. The purposes for which the library is utilized by users.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- (1) How often do the users utilize the library?
- (2) What length of time do users spend in the library?
- (3) What services of the library are more frequently utilized by users?
- (4) What format of information resources is more frequently utilized by users?
- (5) What are the purposes for which the library is utilized by the users?

Methodology

Survey Research Design was adopted for this study. The research population consisted of 14,716 registered library users in three purposively selected Federal University Libraries in North West Nigeria namely: Ramat Library at University of Maiduguri, Borno State, IBB Library at Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, and ATBU Library at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. A sample size of 375 was determined from the population with the aid of the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator. A stratified sampling technique was used in grouping the target respondents namely: Lecturers,

Postgraduate and Undergraduate students in the 3 university libraries. The proportionate Sampling Technique was used to determine the appropriate number of respondents for each selected library and group of respondents from 375 samples. This was done by dividing the sample size (375) by the total population (14,716) and then multiplying the result with a group of respondents within each library.

The group of respondents represents registered lecturers, postgraduate and undergraduate students in each library. The questionnaire was administered using the accidental or convenient technique where the registered library users were engaged during their visit to the library. Research assistants were employed in each library for one month for questionnaire administration and collection.

Based on the sample size, 375 copies of the questionnaire were distributed but only 370 were filed and returned. However, after cross-checking, 360 copies of questionnaires were found valid and usable for data analysis. The collected data were collated and analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. Tables were used to present the analysed data. Table 1 below presents the selected libraries, target population, respondents group, sample size, proportionate sample size, and response rate.

Table 1: Population, Sample Size, Proportionate Sample

Institutions	Registered users						Sample size
	Undergraduate		Postgraduate		Lecturers		
	RU	PS	RU	PS	RU	PS	
Ramat library (Unimaid), University of Maiduguri, Borno State	4650	118	358	9	453	12	
IBB Library (Mautech) Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola	1070	27	302	8	508	13	
ATBU Library, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	5523	141	1500	38	352	9	
Strata	11243		2160		1313		14716
Proportionate Sample		286		55		34	375
Filed and returned questionnaire		283		54		33	370
Valid and usable questionnaire		278		52		30	360

Source: Fieldwork, 2019, **RU**=Registered Users', **PS**=Proportionate Sample'

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Frequency of utilization of University Libraries by respondents

Frequency of libraries utilization	Undergraduate students		Postgraduate students		Lecturers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Occasionally	63	22.7	24	46.2	13	43.3
1-3 time/week	139	50.0	16	30.8	9	30.0
4-5 time/week	76	27.3	12	23.1	8	26.7
total	278	100	52	100	30	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 2 shows differences in the frequency of time users spent when they utilized the library. The table reveals that undergraduate students (27.3%) utilized libraries between 4 – 5 times per week and lecturers (26.7%) utilized the libraries 4 - 5 times per week compared to postgraduate students (23.1%) who utilized libraries for 4-5 times per week. However, 46.2% of the postgraduate students relative to their number in comparison to lectures (43.3%) and undergraduate students (22.7%) utilized the libraries occasionally while

undergraduate students showed the highest percentage (50%) utilization of libraries for 1-3 times per week. This finding is consistent with the discovery in a study by Parande *et al.* (2017) in which they highlighted that frequency of library use by undergraduate students was higher than other categories of users in University libraries. These findings also concurred with Olajide (2017) when they reported that more students use the library occasionally compared to other time like weekly and monthly.

Table 3: Length of time spent in the library by users

Time of using libraries	Undergraduate Students		Postgraduate Students		Lecturers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1-2 hours	138	49.6	27	51.9	9	30.0
3-4 hours	55	19.8	9	17.3	14	46.7
5-6 hours	85	30.6	16	30.8	7	23.3
Total	278	100	52	100	30	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 3 shows the number of hours spent by the various groups of respondents. It is revealed that 30.8% of postgraduate students relative to their number spent 5-6 hours in the libraries compared to undergraduate students (30.6%) and lecturers (23.3%) respectively. In other words, more undergraduate and postgraduate students spend less time in the

libraries (1-2 hours).The finding of this study conformed to Nwezeh and Shabi (2011) study which revealed that most of the students spent one to four hours daily in the library. Their study affirmed that much of the time was spent reading their own books, lecture notes, magazines and the dailies.

Table 4: Services in the study University Libraries

Services used in the libraries	Undergraduate Students		Postgraduate Students		Lecturers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Reference	138	49.6	20	38.5	13	43.3
Short term loan	28	10.1	10	19.2	8	26.7
Inter-library loan	28	10.1	6	11.5	5	16.7
User education	84	30.2	16	30.8	4	13.3
Total	278	100	52	100	30	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 4 shows the services in the libraries that respondents benefited from. It is revealed that undergraduate students (49.6%) benefit from reference service followed by lecturers (43.2%) and postgraduate students (38.5%) relative to their respective proportionate sample size. Lecturers benefited from Short Term Loan service (26.7%), Inter-library loan (16.7%) service more than the undergraduate students (10.1%, 10.1%) and postgraduate students (19.2%, 11.5%) respectively. For

user education, postgraduate students (30.8%) and undergraduate students (30.2%) benefited more than lecturers (13.3%). The reason for this difference might be the fact that lecturers were more aware of these services and harnessed them more for their research and teaching responsibilities. This is in confirmation with the study by Onanuga *et al.* (2017) in which they reported that different library users utilize different library services based on their choice.

Table 5: Format of materials utilized by respondents

Materials used in the libraries	Undergraduate Students		Postgraduate Students		Lecturers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Printed materials	198	71.2	29	55.8	19	63.3
Non-printed materials	80	28.8	23	44.2	11	36.7
Total	278	100	52	100	30	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 5 shows that undergraduate students (71.2%) made use of printed materials lecturers (63.3%) and postgraduate students (55.8%) respectively. Regarding the non-printed materials, it is discovered that postgraduate students (44.2%) use them more followed by lecturers (36.7%) and undergraduate students (28.8%). This disparity might have been due to the specialized format and packaging of most non-print materials which require specialized and costly hardware to utilize which may not readily and easily be accessible to some respondents.

The use of printed materials by undergraduate students in this study is consistent with earlier findings of Hussaini *et al.* (2018) in which the use of printed materials by undergraduates' students was found to be more common than non-print materials. Similarly, the high usage of non-print materials by postgraduate students is an indication of the research-based activity they mostly engage in.

Table 6: Purposes of utilization in the study libraries

Purpose of using libraries	Undergraduate Students		Postgraduate Students		Lecturers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Browsing	30	10.8	8	15.4	3	10.0
Studying	99	35.6	11	21.2	4	13.3
Assignment	17	6.1	13	25.0	0	00.0
Research	14	5.0	9	17.3	7	23.3
Borrowing of books	56	20.1	4	7.7	13	43.3
Leisure	62	22.3	7	13.5	3	10.0
Total	278	100	52	100	30	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 6 reveals that postgraduate students engaged more in browsing (15.4%), followed by undergraduate students (10.8%) and then lecturers (10.0%). Postgraduate students visited the libraries for the purpose of their assignment (25.0%)

than undergraduate students (6.1%). Nevertheless, lecturers visited the libraries for research (23.3) and borrowing of books (43.3%) but not leisure (10.0%) when compared with postgraduate students (17.3%) for research, undergraduate

students (20.1%) for borrowing books and leisure (22.3%) respectively. These findings are in line with the report by Quadri *et al.* (2014) when they stated that 64% of students used the library for assignment at Babcock University and 89% at Redeemer University.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that library patronage and utilization differ among the three categories of users. This is evidenced in the length of time spent in the libraries, frequency of usage and purposes for which the resources of the libraries were used. It is also found out that all users in the study used the library services provided in the various libraries to enhance their studies. Printed information resources were used more than the non-printed resources. The undergraduate students, postgraduate students and lecturers benefited from reference services and user education more than short term loan and interlibrary loan. The undergraduate students used libraries for studying compared to other purposes, postgraduate students used libraries for assignment purposes while lecturer used libraries for borrowing books compared to other purposes.

Based on the level of patronage and utilization of information resources in the libraries under study, the study recommends that all libraries under study should make library stocks more current and easy to utilize to further boost the level of patronage and utilization by their users.

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