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ASSESSMENT OF UNDERGRADUATES’ USAGE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY FOR LEARNING AND RESEARCH IN AFE BABALOLA UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the usage of academic library by undergraduates of Afe Babalola University, Nigeria. Four research questions were considered to gather data. Purposive sampling technique was used to obtain data from 500 students of the university who participated in the study. The findings revealed that 56% of the students visited the library daily. 99.6% of the students sampled only visited the library to read for test and examination while 96.8% visited the library to browse the internet. Also, 79.4% were not satisfied with the seating capacity and availability of computers in the library. The study recommended that lecturers should give reading assignments to students that will require that they visit the library to read even before test and examinations. Also, the library should organize a “library week” every session to sensitize students on the available resources in the library. In addition to college libraries, a more spacious central library should be made available to serve the teeming population of the users.

Keywords: Academic Library, Learning and Research, Undergraduates

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1. INTRODUCTION

The role and contribution of school library services in the provision of education at all levels cannot be over-emphasized especially when one considers the functions of library resources within the academic environment. The main purpose of academic library as stated by Aina (2004) ^[14] is to support the objectives of an academic environment in the areas of learning, teaching and research.

The academic library is the nerve centre or the hub around which scholarship revolves. It is an indispensable instrument for intellectual development. A well stocked academic library is a storehouse of information, or a record of human experience to which users may turn to for data or information (Yusuf & Iwu, 2010) ^[30]. Academic libraries have also been described as the “heart” of the learning community, providing a place for students and faculty to conduct their research and advance their knowledge. In the education system, an academic library is the centre of academic life. A university library or any other library attached to an institution of higher education exists to support the goals of its parent organization. Since university libraries are an integral part of the higher education system, they should provide support services for the formal educational programs as well as for facilities for research and for generation of new knowledge (Gunasekera, 2010) ^[16].

Academic libraries generally contribute to the total development of the teachers and students in no small measure. It enlarges their knowledge and stimulates critical, imaginative and creative facilities. The development of any meaningful educational programme therefore greatly depends on the library. It is an indispensable instrument for intellectual development. For this reasons many educationally advanced countries pay much attention to the development of school library services. Furthermore, many scholars, parents, principals and successive governments have recognized the fact that the presence of functional libraries is essential to the educational development of the nation. This was clearly demonstrated in the National Policy on Education which clearly identifies libraries as one of the most important education services (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004) ^[14].

In the e system, an academic library is the centre of academic life. Since university libraries are an integral part of the higher education system, they should provide support services for the formal educational programs as well as for facilities for research and for generation of new knowledge. In the early years of the 20th century in this country, library utilization formed an indispensable arm in the teaching-learning process which is a vital foundation level in the whole educational cadre. Hence in those days sound, vibrant and well knowledgeable graduates were produced in Nigeria. In this era according to Abdullahi (1998) ^[1], most of the Nigerian students who enter universities have never used the library effectively during their primary and secondary schools. The effective and efficiency of services provided in academic libraries therefore are mainly determined by the library users. Understanding the needs of the target group will help to develop the diverse strategies that are appropriate to obtain effective results.

Several major studies of library users on the use of library resources have been conducted in the past. But none of them has any direct focus on Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to assess undergraduates' usage of academic library for research and learning.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

It would be pertinent to discover whether academic libraries are indeed living up to their objectives. The effectiveness and efficiency of services provided in academic libraries are mainly determined by libraries users. Behling and Cudd (1967)^[8] assert that the library user is regarded as the most logical source to determine whether the library is playing its role satisfactorily or not. Perera (2005)^[27] submits that satisfying user needs is essential to the management of libraries. The management staff of a library should be aware of the current needs of their users, which may vary from one library to another as well as from time to time. Therefore, carrying out regular surveys on user needs at regular intervals on various aspects of library usage will be an invaluable guide in determining the future directions of library developments.

Several studies have been done on the use of school libraries. For instance, a study by Agyekun and Filson (2012)^[3] on the use of library resources by students in Ghana schools found that most of the students use library resources and services to supplement their class notes, assignments and helped them in examination preparation. In the same vain a study conducted by Clabo (2002)^[11], pointed out that students use school library information resources for recreational readings, for reference purposes, doing their school home work, teacher requirements and reading news from newspapers. Similarly, Orji (1996)^[24] found out that users use the library for many and varied reasons namely; to prepare for examination; for leisure; recreation for serious academic work, to see friend and people and so on. He concluded that school libraries are as good as wasted if they are not properly used by students.

Williams (1995)^[29] surveyed Canadian undergraduate library use, and found that active learners who participated more in class and who read, write and study more are regular and active library users. Olanlokun (1982)^[23] found that students use the library for class work, research, discussions, leisure, and other purposes. Ajayi (1993)^[5] notes that students who do not appreciate the value of the library are at disadvantage and may visit the library to only read for examinations. Studies of undergraduates' students' relation to libraries have been conducted in the Nordic countries in Denmark 1995, Sweden 1995 and Finland 1996. The results show that students are rather frequent library users although there are large differences in how students of different disciplines utilize library services. A study by Fister (1992)^[15] concluded that faculty plays a large role in guiding the research of their students. She noted that using finding tools may be a good starting point for the preliminary phase of the research process: later phases force students to rely more on citations as the research questions are more clearly defined.

Accessibility and utilization of library information resources are key factors in the provision of quality services in different types of libraries. Abdullahi (1998)^[1] adds that usefulness of a library depends upon its proper organization which includes the accessibility and availability of information resources, their arrangement, the situation of the library, and the like. Bhand (2013)^[9] asserted that the successful library services depend mainly on satisfaction level of its users with the relevant library information resources, user-centric library services and library staff's supportive attitude.

In a study on students and faculty use of academic libraries in Nigeria, with particular reference to Delta State University, Okiy (2000)^[22] found that respondents used book more than other materials and that they browsed the selves to locate these materials. Callinan (2005)^[10] observed that there are differences in the extent to

which scores of information are used by students in different years of their studies. Apart from web sites and we based lecture notes, lack of awareness is the primary reason why undergraduate students did not use the library's electronic data bases. Oyesiku and Oduwole (2004)^[25] assert that in academic communities, libraries are indispensable. Guskin (1996)^[18] notes that the use of university libraries promotes active learning, thus contributing to students' ability to think critically and work well independently or in group. An academic environment without a library is tantamount to a person without a brain.

In a similar study on the use of Olabisi Onabanjo University Libraries, Yusuf and Iwu (2010)^[30] found that while students visited the library to read for examination, most faculties visited the library to read journal, electronics or print. Ugah (2010)^[28] found that textbooks account for most library visits. Don (2006)^[12] discovered that library computer access is utilized by students far more than faculty, while interlibrary loan services are used more by faculty members. He also noted that both undergraduates and faculty members appeared to be confident about their finding needed print materials and accessing electronic resources at the institutions' libraries.

Certain other factors contributing positively to the perception of library effectiveness were the adequacy and effectiveness of library promotion, involvement of users in the selection of library materials, convenient library location, participation in user education programmes, and availability of assistance for using library resources and facilities and subject background of library professional. Ajibero (1998)^[6] found that most Nigerian university libraries did not meet user expectations. As a result, most students did not learn how to use the library and were not aware of the relationship of the library to their studies. This study will look at the usage of the academic library by undergraduates' students in Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

2.1 Functions of School Libraries

Some of the purpose of school library according to Elaturoti (1993)^[13] includes:

- To support the teaching and education work of the school and
- To develop in young people a habit of reading both for pleasure and for the purpose of gathering information for themselves.

Ibrahim (1997)^[17] is of the opinion that the concept of education and its contents have been changing systematically and very rapidly too over the years. Due to this change, therefore, the functions of school libraries have also rapidly change to include the following:

- To identify and provide adequate and comprehensive teaching and learning resources in difference formats which will meet the intellectual and recreational needs of both teachers and the students
- To systematically organized its materials for easy retrieval access and utilization;
- To help develop various skills, learning and information enquiry skills;
- To relate its resources and services to the school's curriculum, extracurricular programme and anticipated requirement for all teaching units of the school;
- Instructing and orientating the teachers and students on the use of the library;
- To liaise with other relevant external bodies for required information ,resources and services;
- To periodically evaluate its resources and services to determine their relevance to meeting the needs of the users.

2.2 Problems Facing Students in Using the School Libraries

Several scholars have addressed the problem facing students in using school libraries. For example, the study Adeyemi (2009)^[2] in Nigeria found that poor quality of school library resources, scarcity of current reading and research materials were the challenges facing students in using school libraries. In the same vein Arua (2011)^[7], observed that poor library accommodation, poor library orientation and restricted library hours were problems militating against the use of school libraries. In South Africa, Patron-Ash (2012)^[26], revealed that one of the problems facing school libraries include the lack of a national policy, school library information resources, the theft of computers as a result of the lack of security, as well as the lack of understanding by teachers of the role of the library in teaching, learning and writing of take-home assignment and term paper. Furthermore, Clabo (2002)^[11] asserted that reading rooms restrictions, restrictions of numbers of books to borrow at a time, reference materials, lack of computers and internet connectivity are the challenges that hinder students in the use of school libraries.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The school library is expected to provide materials to support teaching and encourage students to find out things for themselves. Government and private institutions have also sunk large sum of money into the provision of library material resources for both teachers and students. Regrettably, observation indicates that such efforts have not led to effective utilization of school libraries by teachers and students. The problem stands that if the teachers do not use the library, it will be difficult for them to prepare their lesson notes very well which will affect their teaching and productivity generally. As a result, the situation will have a cycling effect on the quality of students as the teachers will be breeding half-baked graduates from the schools. The consequence of this is that these students will be ill-equipped and will not be able to face future academic challenges.

Evidence from literature showed that few studies have been carried out on the use of academic libraries in private institutions. These researchers embarked on the assessment of students' usage of academic library resources for learning and research in Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, a private university in Nigeria.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The need of this study into school library resources users (lecturers and students) arose within an assumption that the information environment is complex and is changing quickly. Individuals have to learn critical thinking and research skills in the evaluation of information in their fields of interests. University libraries of Afe Babalola University though differently located have enough materials for consultation and adequately trained staff to reach all their users to meet their educational and information needs. This study examines the accessibility of different users of available resources.

This study will be undoubtedly of immense help to both staff and students to explore the available resources in the school libraries. It will also encourage the university authority to work on upgrading the school library to meet the 21st century standard. The explosion of information might appear overwhelming, that is, with increased academic research publishing output, a proliferation of formats of presentation of information, and enormous quantities of information of doubtful quality and origin that dilute the high quality research output and make it more

difficult to locate. These pressures have transformed the demands and skills needed to search for required (quality) information and transformed what it means to be an educated person. The countries with developed education and advanced library systems developed extensive instructional services programmes, planned to educate students, faculty and administrative staff through the ways of lectures, seminars, workshops, handouts, and Web-based tutorials. They stress (and strive to support) the teaching, learning, and research goals of the university. One of their goals is to provide instructional services for the university community that supports each individual's ability to use information resources effectively.

The study will also enhance teachers' and students' better attitude towards usage of academic library and the lecturers' job will be made much more easier if they consult materials in the library and not solely rely on internet material for teaching. The students will also perform better in school and have broadened knowledge of their areas of specialization.

5. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the usage of school libraries for research and learning by students of Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. The study intend to:

- Investigate undergraduates' frequency usage of academic library and online services.
- Find out undergraduates' reasons for the use of the library.
- Examine library facilities used by undergraduates for learning and research
- Measure the level of users' satisfaction of library facilities

6. METHODOLOGY

The research design for the study was the descriptive survey research design. A descriptive method involves collection of data in order to test or answer question concerning the current status of the subject of the study. This study was designed to determine the usage of the academic library resources by students of Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, hence the appropriateness of the descriptive design.

The sample consisted of five hundred undergraduates of Afe Babalola University. The purposive sampling technique was used to obtain samples for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have been in the University for at least one session. The idea behind using this category of subjects is that they would be able to contribute appropriately both in terms of relevance and depth. The researchers with the help of library staff administered 580 questionnaires to the respondents as they come to use the library others were given to students reading in the lecture rooms. Only 500 questionnaires were found useable. The quantitative data collected from questionnaire was coded and summarized prior to analysis by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. The researchers utilized descriptive statistics, in the form of frequencies and percentages in data analysis.

Findings and Analysis

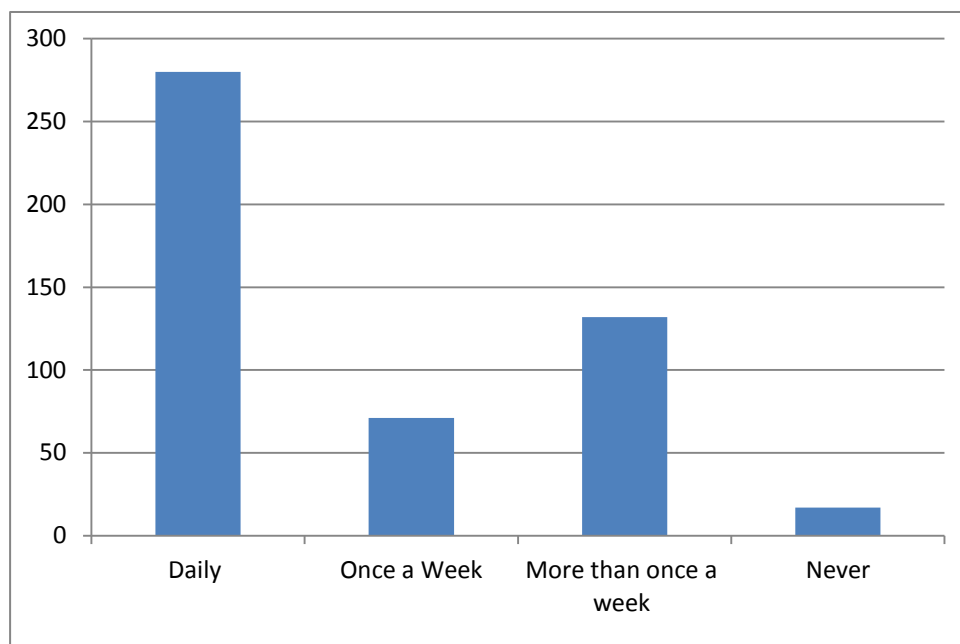


Figure 1 Frequency of usage of the Library by undergraduates

Figure 1 above shows the frequency of using the library. The results indicate that 280 (56%) of respondent visited the library daily, 132 (26.4%) visited more than once in a week. It further shows that 71 (14.2%) only visited the library once in a week while 17 (3.4%) never visited the library. From the finding it is clear that undergraduates in Afe Babalola University use the library regularly. This result contradicts that of Aura and Chiaka (2011)^[7] on the use of the library that most students visited the library irregularly. The result however confirms Williams (1992)^[29] and Julien (2000)^[20] who observed that regular library users are active learners who participate more in class, and read, write and study more.

Table 1 Reasons for use of the library

| Reasons for using the library | N | % |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------|
| To read newspapers and magazines | 201 | 40.2% |
| To read lecture notes | 396 | 79.2% |
| To write assignments | 384 | 76.8% |
| To consult textbooks | 398 | 79.6% |
| To borrow books | 135 | 27% |
| To read for test and examination | 498 | 99.6% |
| To consult journals | 71 | 14.2% |
| To use the internet to browse | 484 | 96.8% |
| To consult reference materials | 113 | 22.6% |
| To photocopy materials | 137 | 27.4% |
| For research | 280 | 56% |

Table 1 above indicates reason given by respondents for using the library. The results show that 99.6% of respondents visited the library to read for test and examination, 96.8% visited the library to use the internet to browse, 79.6% to consult textbooks, 79.2% to read lecture notes while 76.8 visited the library to write assignments. The indication of these results is that undergraduates make use of the library for academic purpose, that is, to read and browse the internet to write assignment, test and examinations. This result is in consonant with Ugah (2001)^[28] who found that textbooks account for most library visit by students in higher institution. However, the result is at variance with Yusuf and Iwu (2010)^[30] study on the use of academic library in Covenant University, Nigeria where the use of the library to consult textbooks accounted for the lowest percentage among other reasons.

Table 2 Library Facilities mostly used by undergraduates for Learning and Research

| Library facilities mostly used by undergraduates | NO | % |
|---|-----------|----------|
| Textbook | 369 | 73.8% |
| Computer facilities | 247 | 49.4% |
| Internet facilities | 470 | 94% |
| Electronic Journals | 194 | 38.8% |
| Scholarly Journals | 384 | 76.8% |
| Dictionaries | 216 | 43.2% |
| Magazines | 187 | 37.4% |
| Electronic Database | 269 | 53.8% |

Table 2 clearly highlights library facilities mostly consulted by respondents. The results show that undergraduates used the library internet facility mostly (94%), 76.8% used the scholarly journal while 73.8% used the textbooks in that order. The indication is that students know that to combine information from the internet, scholarly journal and textbooks will give them wider knowledge of the subject than using just one source of information. This result is in consonant with Arua and Chinaka (2011)^[7] who affirmed that school library information resources are seen as all inputs which if well utilized will enable scholars to achieve their educational goals. This result is not in agreement with Ladelunuri (2012)^[21] who asserted that poor performance of students in Tanzania is attributed to lack of current and relevant reading materials that meet academic needs of students.

As it is evident in Table 4 above, the findings revealed that respondents indicated that were satisfied with cleanliness of the library (93.6%), lightening (89.6%), staff of the library and the opening hours (88.6%) respectively. They were also satisfied with the library catalogs (79.2%) and reading materials textbooks (78.4%). However, quiet a number of respondents 79.4% were not satisfied with seating capacity of the library, the number of computers available for students' use 79.4% and with the photocopy services 68.6%. This result corroborates the study of Gunasekera (2010)^[16] who found that undergraduates have overall satisfaction of available library resources, services and facilities. Whereas, Arua's (2011)^[7] findings revealed that majority of the students in his study were dissatisfied with the school library information resources.

Table 3 Level of satisfaction with Library Resources

| Library Resources | Very satisfied | | Not very satisfied | |
|--------------------|----------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % |
| Reading materials | 392 | 78.4% | 108 | 21.6% |
| Lightening | 448 | 89.6% | 52 | 10.4% |
| Library catalogs | 396 | 79.2% | 104 | 20.8 |
| Seating capacity | 103 | 20.6% | 397 | 79.4% |
| Cleanliness | 468 | 93.6% | 32 | 6.4% |
| Computers | 103 | 20.6% | 397 | 79.4 |
| Staff | 443 | 88.6% | 57 | 11.4% |
| Security | 288 | 57.6% | 212 | 42.4% |
| Opening hour | 443 | 88.6% | 57 | 11.4% |
| Photocopy services | 157 | 31.4% | 343 | 68.6% |

The indication is that there are still few things in the library that do not satisfy student academic needs which the authorities must attend to According to Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu (2012) ^[19] satisfaction is a function of the three main sources; quality of the information resources, the information system and the services that make the information product available. Therefore, there is need to improve available facilities to meet the academic needs of students.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was carried out to investigate the use of academic library resources for learning and research in Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti. Key findings revealed that majority of students use the library on daily basis or at least more than once a week. Moreover, result showed that respondents visited the library mostly to read for test and examination, to browse the internet, consult relevant textbooks and read their lecture notes. Students are mere conversant with the internet facilities provided in the library. The findings further revealed that students expressed satisfaction with the cleanliness, lightening, services rendered by staff of the library and the opening hours. However, the study recommended the following:

- Lecturers should give reading assignments to students that will require them to use library resources in the library.
- The University Librarian should consider organizing a “library week” once in a session to sensitize students on the various resources available in the library and their importance
- The University authority should consider having a separate building spacious enough to accommodate more students whenever they come to use the library
- Additional computers should be made available to serve teeming population of students who come to use the library on regular basis.

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