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Assessing Challenges faced by Library Information Service Users in selected Public University Libraries in Western Kenya.

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Abstract

Public university libraries in this dynamic and innovative environment strives to satisfy their users' needs. Empirical literature on users' satisfaction is extensive but controversial when it comes to different categories of users. Therefore, the objectives of this study is to assess challenges 4 public university libraries of western Kenya faces in accessing library and information services with appropriate solutions. Quantitative and qualitative research design was used with a purposive sample size of 378 students, 92 lecturers, 27 library staffs and 10 top management. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis. The results were presented by use of percentages, frequency tables and bar graphs. The findings indicated that library and information services, the service personnel and persons with special needs did not meet the respondent satisfactions and perceptions as the users wanted more improved services.

Key words: Users satisfaction, academic libraries, library services in four universities of western Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

University libraries serve their parent institutions as repository information providers, recreational facilities, and computer and information literacy provider. Continual changes in users' needs as a result of dynamic and innovative environment have pushed a challenge to service providers, making libraries to struggle with expressing and quantifying their values to stakeholders. Libraries should focus in implicit, explicit and derived values of resources assessment.

Akpan and Akpan 2018, asserts that university libraries is the principal instrument in conversion of recorded knowledge. Hansen (1998), posit it as an intrusive environment without any barriers to special needs students. Libraries of 4 universities of western Kenya attracts less of users of higher level of professionalism shown by respondents' majority at 62% bachelors, 6.4% masters, 3.5% diplomas and only 1.8% PhD. Levels of education

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

University library is the principal instrument in conversion of recorded knowledge. Due to review of university curriculums, the resources are not in tandem with the users' needs and more students and academic staffs of 4 university libraries of western Kenya do not make use of the libraries, although library supports research and learning activities in all spheres of education.

The study therefore intends to assess challenges faced by four public university libraries in accessing library and information services and appropriate solutions.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess challenges in the use of library and information services offered to users in 4 public universities of western Kenya.
2. To assess challenges in the assistance by librarian staff in university libraries of western Kenya.
3. To assess challenges in the library services provided for users with special needs in university libraries of western Kenya

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and qualitative descriptive research design was used. It was conducted in 4 public university libraries of western Kenya. The study population comprise of all academic staff, trained librarians, top management and categories of students where the data was collected by questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondent rate was 73%. 67% was for the males and 33% was for females.

Fig 13: Challenges in the use of Library and Information Services
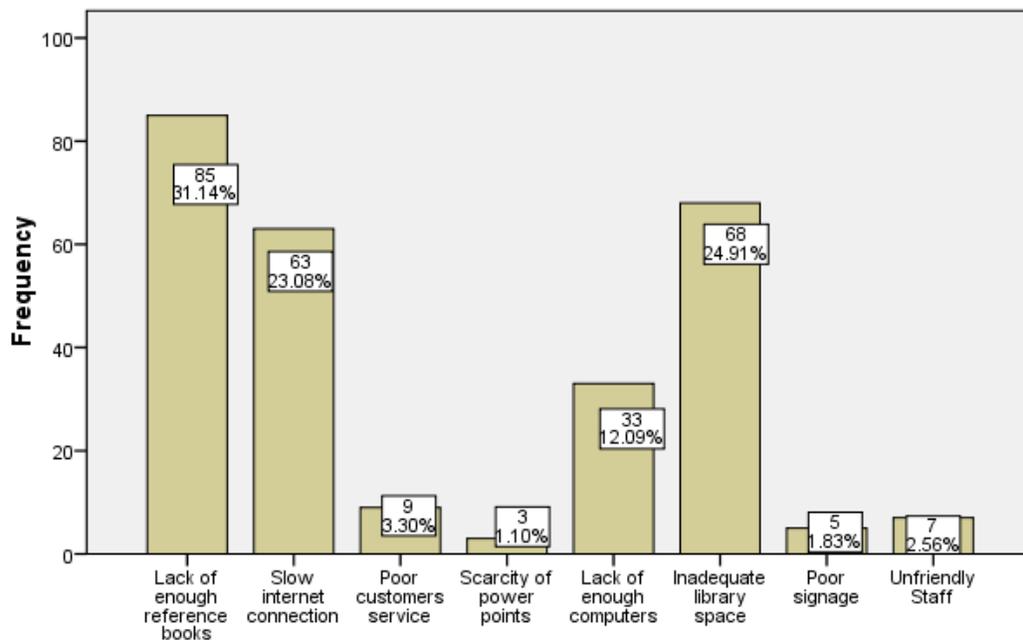
31.14 percent felt that the library lacked enough reference books. This was a sign that library collections did not meet the respondent satisfaction and perceptions as the users wanted more improved services. It concurs with Kitan and Serder, (2014) in a survey of academic staff of Girme American University, Cyprus. In the use of catalogue 27.8 percent were satisfied with the use of catalogue since it minimized time for research, while 22 percent also indicated ease to use. It concurs with Majid Anwar and Eisenschitz, 2009, on a report on Malaysian Agricultural Libraries. 23.0 percent indicated slow internet connection. This concurs with the work with Nawarathne and Singh (2013) Sri Lanka academic libraries on internet facilities for libraries user

and availability of information in the online catalogue. 12.09 percent lacked computers, it concurs with Snoj and Petermanec, (2001), Namaganda and Sekimano (2013), Asqhar and Shafigue on e-learning facilities. Rehman (2013), study on libraries in Pakistan found similar challenges on inability of the libraries on adequate ICT facilities, inaccessible library websites, and insufficient information maternal. 25.7 percent of respondents borrowed and lend books showing dissatisfaction. It concurs with Asghar and Shafigue (2012) on comparative study of Libraries of Bahawalpur, India where the users were not satisfied with the range of books, check out system, convenient service hours, prompt service, e-learning facilities and opening hours. 24.91 percent respondents said that library space was not enough for a learning environment. It concurs with Mahindra and Kumar (2015) finding library environment as predictive in outcome.

Fig 2: Service Personnel
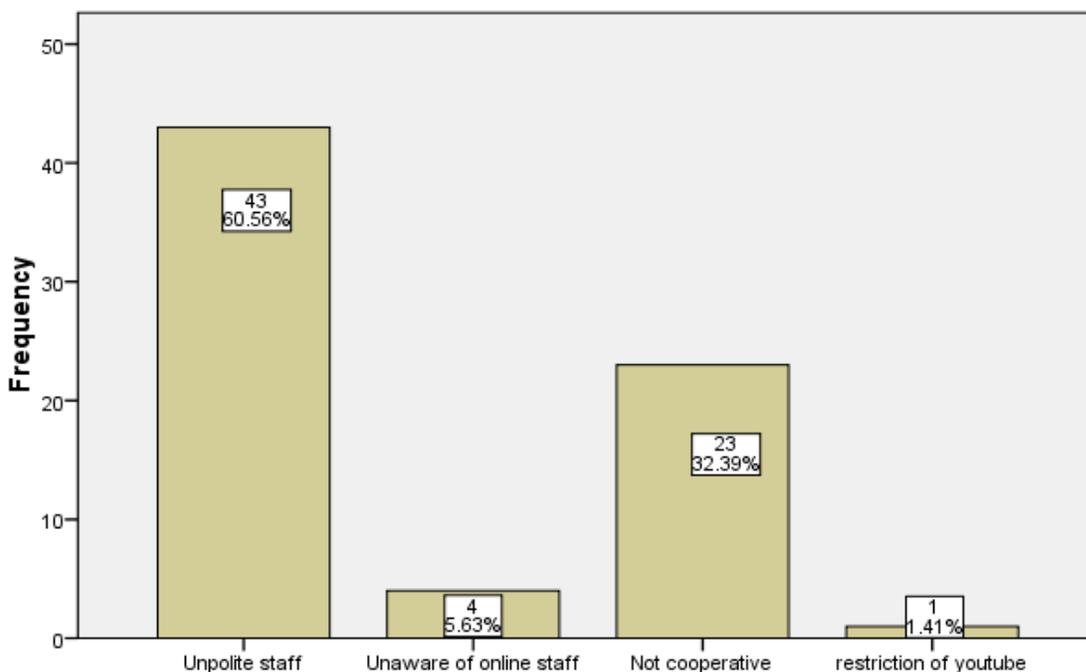
60.5 percent of the respondents felt that staffs were impolite, while 32.39 percent indicated that staffs are not co-operative and 5.63 percent said that staffs are unaware of the online system. 3.3 percent of the respondents cited poor customer services. It concurs with Rehman (2013) study on libraries in Pakistan which found similar challenges on the inability of the libraries under study to adequately meet the needs of the users.

Table 1: Challenges in the use of Services for users with special needs

Services for users with special needs

Responses	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Elevators	292	1	5	1.97	1.236
Speech synthesiser	289	1	5	2.22	1.186
Hearing devices for deaf persons	293	1	5	2.27	1.219
Braille machines	293	1	5	2.43	1.324
Directional signs in large print	294	1	4	2.81	2.791
Wheel chair ramps	301	1	5	3.03	1.603

Means for Elevators was 1.97, Speech Synthesiser 2.22, Hearing devices for deaf persons 2.27, Braille machines 2.43, Directional signs in large print 2.81 and Wheel chair ramps 3.03. it concurs with Ayoung and Fredrick (2020) in a survey of 20 University Libraries in Nigeria which revealed that although the majority of the libraries were in high rise buildings. They lacked elevators and wheel chair ramps; some were not even large enough to facilitate entrance by people using wheelchairs, while others also had high shelves and narrow doors. This support the assertion by Viney (2006) that special needs persons encounter physical-access limitation such as retrieving books from library shelves. This study agrees with sentiments of Iyoro (2004) that Accessibility is one of the pre-requisite of information use. It concurs with IFLA (2009) that surroundings of the library, the entrance, restrooms, stairs, elevators and special rooms should be accessible for persons with different kinds of disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

i. To ensure continued compliance to the statutory standards and guidelines of the commission of university education, the university libraries should lobby for increase of their budget to enable them provide sustainable information services, scale up information services and other related facilities to the user population.

ii. In today's techno-centric era, University libraries in the Western Region should adopt, develop ICT-based library solutions and market driven services to adequately meet the diverse needs of their users.

iii. Libraries should be more proactive and anticipate the needs of persons with special needs then plan on how to meet these needs. A good starting point would be to ensure that services to persons with special needs are included in the library policy

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