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**INFORMATION NEEDS AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES OF
POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN BENUE STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the information needs and research activities of postgraduates in universities in Benue State. Two specific objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population for the study was 3821 postgraduate students in the three universities in Benue State (Benue State University, University of Agriculture, Makurdi and University of Mkar, Mkar). The sample size of 362 postgraduates from the three universities under study was selected using proportionate stratified and convenience sampling techniques. Data collected was analyzed using Frequency Counts, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviation. Findings of the study revealed the research activities of postgraduate students in universities in Benue State to include: academic information, employment information, entertainment information, jobs update and global information, information for personal development and political information among others. The findings also revealed the methods used by library staff in meeting the information needs of postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State. The methods used are: internet; conference; library; Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI); Current Awareness Services (CAS). It was concluded that Library information resources are vital ingredients in academic libraries for meeting the information needs of postgraduate students. The study recommended that the University management should ensure adequate funding of university libraries to enhance the availability of information resources; University libraries should provide programmes that could train their students in up-to-date 21st century skills of information retrieval; University Library management should ensure that its staff develop positive attitudes towards users for effective dissemination of information on new trends in the library.

KEYWORDS: Information Needs; Research Activities; Postgraduate Students; Universities; Libraries

INTRODUCTION

Information is an indispensable tool for human existence and societal development. The development of any society depends largely on the level of information obtained at regular intervals. Information gives an individual power to influence and dominate. Therefore everybody needs information to catch up with the cultural, academic and technological advancement in the 21st century. Annune (2012) maintained that, the status and power of a nation by the 21st century will be partly determined by the quality of information at its disposal and the recognition of the importance of information for societal development. Annune (2012) advanced that with access to information an individual (students inclusive) would be lifted from the state of ignorance, illiteracy and poverty to the state of enlightenment, prosperity and literacy. Post graduate students who access and utilize information are likely to excel in their academic activities hence information is power.

Access to current and relevant information helps postgraduate students to be lifted from the state of unknown to known. Fasola, and Olabode (2013) further observed that, the need for information as a resource becomes more apparent when information is understood to mean facts, data, and opinions. Post graduate students may acquire this information through the means of researching which entails the process of utilizing ideas, facts and new information by a scientific and systematic study. Umunnakwe, Umunnakwe, Opara, and Dike (2018) asserted that, people need information to be liberated from the shackles of ignorance, misconceptions, economic stagnation, social unrest and political instability. There are different types of information needs namely: social or pragmatic, success and specialized information needs.

Information needs can be social, economic, political, cultural or educational. Though there seems to exist many reasons and sources of information to the information user, the university library occupies a central position in the information utilization process of postgraduate students in Nigerian universities. The library, therefore, is the most widely used source of information available to literate societies. The librarian should be aware of what kind of information is being sought, and how it can be obtained. Due to the rapidly escalating cost of purchasing and archiving printed scholarly journals and electronic media, the library has the duty to provide and maintain efficient services.

The information need is a factual situation in which, there exists an inseparable interconnection with “information” and “need”. Information need can therefore be said to be a desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. Thus, information need arise wherever students find themselves in a situation requiring knowledge to deal with the situation as they see fit. In other words, lack of information to accomplish a task results in information need which several authors have variously described and explained (Singh, Kumar, & Khanchandani, 2015). Information needs are diverse and constantly changing and not amenable to generalization.

Information is an important factor in any university library because it is needed by users post graduate students inclusive. Every post graduate student needs information for their academic purposes. Therefore, the university library serves as a vital and important channel where information is acquired, processed and disseminated for utilization through the provision of appropriate information resources in its various formats that is; print and non-print to students (post graduate inclusive). These university libraries form the integral part of the universities they served. Nwobasi, Uwa, & Ossai-Onah, (2013) maintained that

library is central to academic activities of the universities and should be funded at a level that provides effective services to students and staff. The basic aim and objective of university libraries is to support the diverse programme offered by their parent institutions. Kumar, (2013) pointed out that, university libraries are aimed at supporting the objectives of their parent universities which has to do with learning, teaching, research and services. This support is given by assembling a wide range of information resources in all formats for utilization by postgraduate students. University libraries provide relevant information resources and as well rendered services to ensure sustainability of teaching, learning and research functions of their parent universities. To this effect, university libraries select, acquire, organize and disseminate information to meet the needs of the entire university communities. Tella, Bode-Obanla, and Age, (2020) affirmed that, academic health, intellectuality and effectiveness of institutions of higher learning in producing high quality of information resources available in their libraries to support the teaching learning and research activities of their parent institutions.

The researcher has over the years observed that postgraduate students face series of challenges while trying to utilize information resources in university libraries despite having a plethora of information needs to be met. The students seem to be faced with inadequate library resources for the needs, lack of electricity, incorporative attitude of library staff, obsolete materials among others as challenges in the utilization of information resources.

These challenges may greatly affect research activities of post graduate students in Benue State, Nigeria. To achieve academic excellence in university institutions, provision

of accurate relevant and timely information ought to be paramount to university libraries for utilization by postgraduate students.

Universities in Benue State established their libraries in order to support academic activities of teaching learning and research. These libraries are well stocked with information resources to be utilized by postgraduate students, greater percentage of these post graduate students often visit the library to consult information resources based on their different needs. Library staff on the other hand ensures that information needs of the postgraduate students are addressed by delivering effective services. Hence, this study sought to investigate the information needs and research activities by postgraduate students in Universities in Benue State, Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the research activities of postgraduate students of universities in Benue State.
2. Determine the methods used by library staff in meeting the information needs of postgraduate students targeted towards to the research activities of universities in Benue State

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design aims at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features, or facts about a given sample of a population. The target population for this study was 3821 postgraduate students in the three universities under study. The sample size of 362 postgraduates from the three universities under study was

used. This sample size of the postgraduate students was determined using Taro Yamane formula (1969).

RESULTS

4.1.1 Research Question One:

What are the research activities of postgraduate students in universities in Benue State?

S/No	Research activities	FREQUENCY		PERCENTAGE (%)		DECISION
		N	NN	N	NN	
1	My research work centered on academic information needs	258	104	71.3	28.7	Needed
2	My research work requires employment information	276	86	76.2	23.8	Needed
3	My research work requires entertainment Information	231	131	63.8	36.2	Needed
4	My research work requires jobs update	270	92	74.6	25.4	Needed
5	My research work centered on global event	297	65	82.0	18.0	Needed
6	My research work requires personal development information	289	73	79.8	20.2	Needed
7	My research work requires political information	292	70	80.7	19.3	Needed
8	My research work requires social/recreational information	256	106	70.7	29.3	Needed
9	My research work centered on health advancement	263	99	72.6	27.4	Needed
10	My research work requires business/ financial information	248	114	68.5	31.5	Needed

N = Needed, NN = Not Needed

Table 1 showed the research activities of postgraduate students of the universities under study in frequency counts and percentages. As revealed on the table, all the items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 have percentage values for “information needed” above 50%. Hence these information provided on the table were considered the research activities of postgraduate students of the universities in Benue State

4.1.2 Research Question Two:

What are the methods used by library staff in meeting the information needs of postgraduate students targeted towards to the research activities of universities in Benue State?

S/No	Methods	FREQUENCY		PERCENTAGE (%)		DECISION
		U	NU	U	NU	
11	Library	298	64	82.3	17.7	Used
12	Internet	287	75	79.3	20.7	Used
13	Radio/television	70	292	19.3	80.7	Not Used
14	Conference/ seminar	296	66	81.8	18.2	Used
15	Book clubs/ association	68	294	18.8	81.2	Not Used
16	Selective dissemination of information (SDI)	279	83	77.0	23.0	Used
17	Current awareness services (CAS)	267	95	73.8	26.2	Used

U= Used, NU = Not Used

Table 2 showed the methods used by library staff in meeting the information needs of postgraduate students in frequency counts and percentages. As revealed on the table, items

11, 12, 14, 16, and 17 have percentage values for 'used' above 50%. These items are therefore considered the various methods used by library staff in meeting the information needs of postgraduate students in universities in Benue State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first findings of the study revealed that the research activities of postgraduate students in universities in Benue State include: academic information, employment information, entertainment information, jobs update, global information, and information for personal development, political information, social/recreational information, health information and business/financial information. This finding corroborate with that of Navalur, Balasubramani, and Kumar (2012) who reported that students need information for entertainment, fiction and research monographs. The findings also agree with that of Padma, Ramasamy, and Niraimathi (2015) who reported that students research activities cut-across academic development, national and peace and conflict resolution, sustainable and personal development. Similarly, Soni, Rani, Kumar, and Shrivastava (2020) reported that students need information for research work, writing term paper and completing course assignment. From this finding therefore, it can be inferred that postgraduate students have varying research interest and hence the reason why the use the library.

The second findings of the study revealed that the various methods used by library staff in meeting the information needs of postgraduate students in universities in Benue State are: library, internet, conference/seminar, selective dissemination of information (SDI) and current awareness service (CAS). The findings disagree with that of Zaid, Egberongbe, and Adekanye (2016) who reported sources of information to include: television, radio, traditional healers, health workers, chemist shop drug sellers, local herb

hawkers and friends/family. The variation of the present findings with this finding could be that the study of Adefunke, Dris, and Omolola (2019) focused on rural women sources of health information unlike this study which is on information' needs of postgraduate.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. University management should ensure adequate funding of university libraries to enhance the availability of information resources. The provision of more information resources presents an opportunity for postgraduates and indeed all library users to count on the library in its capacity to provide relevant information to meet their various needs.
2. University libraries should provide programmes that could train their students in up-to-date 21st century skills of information retrieval. This will help to solve the problems of ICTs skills among postgraduate students
3. University Library management should ensure that its staff develop positive attitudes towards users for effective dissemination of information on new trends in the library

The study concluded that the core emphasis of postgraduate students centered on research activities, therefore it is pertinent for libraries in universities located in Benue State to acquired pertinent information resources. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that, Library information resources are vital ingredients in academic libraries for meeting the information needs of postgraduate students. The postgraduate students in universities in Benue State highly utilize the available information resources to meet their information needs.

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