

PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Oyewo Abiola Oluwaseunfunmi.

University Library, Igbinedion University, Okada,
Edo State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *Public libraries play fundamental roles in the mental and intellectual development of young adults via the provision of resources and services fitted for their information needs. Unfortunately, this cannot be said of public libraries in Nigeria. The situation is not helped by the paucity of scholarship that particularly examines young adults' resource/service satisfaction as a separate category of users in the Nigerian public library system. Hence, this paper critically examines the information needs of young adult patrons of public libraries in Nigeria, with the Oyo State Public Library as a case study. Research questions were formulated, with the questionnaire as the data collection instrument. A total of 110 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, out of which 92 (86.3% of the representative population) were retrieved. The study reveals dissatisfaction by young adult patrons with the Library's services due to its inadequate infrastructure, collections, and trained library staff. Appropriate recommendations were proffered.*

KEYWORDS: Public libraries, young adults, information needs, library resources and services.

INTRODUCTION

Information is a major resource in the development of human beings; it is the heart of world developments. People's increased access to timely, accurate, relevant, reliable and current information is considered to be a significant precursor to their physiological, psychological, social development and technological innovations, [Iloeje, 2001].

According to Agosto [2011], the information needs of young adults are diverse. Some of these include information relating to peer, family, and other relationships, popular culture, emotional needs, physical health and safety, emerging sexuality, consumer needs, academics, leisure activities and interests, careers and college. Tichauer [1999], speaking in the same vein, maintained that the issues facing today's young adults are monumental, including poverty, incarceration, crime, unemployment, teen pregnancy, and attrition, and that they require timely and adequate information to navigate their ways through these challenges.

Despite this, the young adult reader is largely unrecognized by libraries as a specialist target market, [Walter, et al., 2005]. Kargbo [2007], stated that among the varied types of library users in most developing countries, young adults are the most easily and often neglected in terms of collection development and the provision of services. They are also among the most steadfast and heaviest users of public library services. Brown [2004], found in her study that just as there has been little written specifically on the delivery of library reference and information services to young adults; there is also a scarcity of literature relating to the evaluation of such a service. According to Walter [2003], library service to young adults is lacking in vigorous historical analysis and documentation. She noted that most studies show

that 50-60% of all public library users are young people; however, there is limited data about what they are doing in the library.

Authors have variously agreed [Bolan, et al., 2007], that examining how young adults perceive the library resources and services available for their use can provide a better understanding of their library use, and serve as a guide not only for providing adequately for their information needs, but also for enhancing services and improving their reference encounter. It is in the light of this, that this study examines the information needs of young adult patrons of the Oyo State Public Library Nigeria, resources available to meet these needs and the level of satisfaction with these resources and services.

Background information on Oyo State Public Library, Nigeria

The Oyo State Public Library was established in 1955 under the Government of the Western Region of Nigeria and then known as the Western Region Library. In 1979, Oyo State was created and Western Region Library was restructured and renamed the Oyo State Library. In 1988, it was further renamed the Oyo State Library Board under edict 18 of that year. It presently has its headquarters at Dugbe, Ibadan and branches at Elekuro, Bodija, Oyo and Ogbomosho. The Library and its branches serve all the 33 Local Governments in Oyo State, providing a range of resources and services to cater for the information needs of all strata of the society, including young adults, [Olarongbe, 2013].

Statement of the Problem

It has been noted that the public library plays an important role in providing young adults with free and open access to knowledge. However, it is believed that public libraries in Nigeria have neglected this role and have not paid attention to the provision of information needs of the young adult as a specialist target market. The situation in Nigeria is no different. Furthermore, there is a paucity of scholarship in Nigeria that particularly examines young adults' resource/service satisfaction, as a separate category of library users in public libraries. This study thus examines the information needs of the young adult users of the Oyo State Public Library, Nigeria, resources available to meet these needs and their level of satisfaction with these resources.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study is to examine the information needs of the young adult users of the Oyo State Public Library Nigeria, the resources and services available to meet these needs and to determine the level of satisfaction with these resources and services. To this end four (4) research questions were formulated.

Research Questions

- a) What are information needs of young adult users of Oyo State Public Library?
- b) What resources and services are available to meet these needs?
- c) How satisfied are the young adult users with the available resources and services?
- d) What are the perceived constraints to the effective use of library resources by young adult users of Oyo State Public Library?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public libraries play fundamental roles in providing young adults with free and open access to knowledge, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. They serve as conduits of timely information, equipping young adults with lifelong learning and literacy skills such that they are empowered to positively shape the future of their societies, [IFLA, 2003].

Libraries have traditionally been key providers of information. They are considered learned institutions, equipped with treasures of knowledge which are maintained, organized, and managed by trained personnel to educate children, men and women continuously and to assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of the information embodied in the resources, [Islam, 2004]. Likewise, the librarian is a link between the library resources and library user, bringing both together and ensuring that library resources meet the information needs of patrons in the most effective and efficient way. Public libraries in particular facilitate access to information by all, serving people from all walks of life no matter who they are, and young adults are one of their most important patrons.

Authors have agreed that the information needs of young adults are varied. For example, Meyers [1999], in his study about the information needs of young adults discovered that young adults wanted less welcoming space, more access to higher end technology, more help with their homework, and better books and magazines. They also wanted less restrictive rules and fees and claimed that they could help libraries become better places young adults. On the other hand, the American Harris Poll [2007], stated that the major reason young people gave for visiting libraries was to borrow books for personal use, for school assignments, to read on the premises or to use the library website for information, research or recreation, or to 'hang out' with friends. Akinola [2013], is of the opinion that young adults need information on personal development, academic work, job/career information, health-related information, sports and news, recreation, and research information. The American Young Adults Library Service Association (YALSA), recommended some guidelines for the provision of resources and services to young adults. As part of the guidelines, they stated that young adults need a space of their own, professional staff trained to work with young adults, programmes and activities to address their physical, psychological and emotional needs, inclusion of young adults in creating their own space, services and resources. In addition, the Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) [2010] identified factors which would motivate young people to use libraries more extensively to include provision of recreational reading and multimedia material of interest to their age group; greater participation and involvement in the planning and running of libraries; access to creative pursuits, such as creative writing and music-based activities; the availability of school text books and study supports; the opportunity to 'hang out' with friends in a comfortable and youth-friendly public space. Bolan et al., [2007] is of the opinion that young adults also want interactive services and spaces that they can identify as their own.

The quality of services offered by libraries depend on the evaluation procedures and processes established, [Riechel, 1999]. Consistent evaluation of library resources and services is invaluable, in that it can reveal what has been achieved and what should be done to improve matters, [Kumar, 1978]. Evaluation can also lead to improvement in overall performance through reducing unnecessary routines, use of labor-saving devices, improving resources and services. According to Sumsion [2001], the results of analysis and evaluation can enable the development informational infrastructure, avoidance of redundant duplication of activities and also ensure rational use of resources whilst at the same time meeting the needs of library

patrons. However, measurement of services cannot be undertaken until librarians recognize that young adults have special needs and in order to assess the dimensions of this need statistics should be collected, [Hogan, 1986]

It is generally believed that users are in the best position to evaluate the effectiveness or adequacy of any library resource and service. There is no doubt that if the research library is effective or adequate, it follows that the users are satisfied with the totality of its resources and services. According to Lancaster [1977], an evaluation of effectiveness is an evaluation of user satisfaction. Such an evaluation should determine how well an information service satisfies the needs of its users. Jimba [2000], observes that for a library to be sure that it is carrying out its mandate to its users, “totality of features and characteristics of its resources and services must be able to satisfy all users stated or implied needs”. Nwalo, [2000], stated that in order to assess the performance of reference services by user approach, a questionnaire is usually designed requesting users to assess specific aspects of reference service attitude of the reference service attitude of the reference librarian to users, speed of answering a query, how satisfactorily queries are answered, ease of using the catalogue assistance in inter-library loans, appropriateness of library displays and so on.

Some authors have carried out user based evaluation exercises on library resources and services, and from these, various factors have been identified as causes of inadequate or ineffective utilization of library resources and services. Some of these factors include distance to the library and lack of transportation, competition from a range of contemporary media, entertainment and information sources available to young people in their homes, and limited opening hours, psychological factors include an association of silence or boredom with study, perception of library staff as unwelcoming and a lack of the habit of using library services.[Thorhauge, 2003, Coradini, 2006]. Furthermore, library buildings are sometimes perceived as boring or intimidating, and young people have also cited a lack of interesting materials and activities. Librarians on the other hand cited a lack of knowledge of library services followed by a lack of interest in libraries. (This coincides with the findings of the American Survey by Eakin, [2006]). Other issues mentioned included limited opening hours, teenagers’ lack of time due to school assignments and exam pressure. ICT infrastructure development and poor funding have also been identified as factors[Oduwole, 2010, Adedoyin, 2005], followed by poor ICT skills among staff. According to Nwokocha [2010], lack of funds is one of the biggest problems libraries face and this hinders the development of public libraries. Ajibero [2000] attributes this to economic conditions, government attitude, and inadequate information infrastructure. Poor or inadequate young adult collection in public libraries is also seen as a challenge. Most public libraries are considered no better than archives, lacking contemporary books, serials and audio-visual equipment. Lack of properly trained young adult librarians is also factor. For example, most public libraries surveyed by Eakin [2003], do not have a properly trained young adult librarians, efforts being more geared more towards other library patrons, rather than the young adults. Location of the libraries is another barrier. Most of the public libraries are not centrally located while some are situated in noisy environments and therefore fail to attract serious readers. Other recurrent themes highlighted as barriers to library use include a negative attitude to young people’s presence in libraries, the need for library staff to be more user-friendly and open to providing support to children and young people [Jones, 2006] and the need for the same standards of care to be applied to all users of the library, whether young or old [CILIP, 2002]. Library staff themselves may be reluctant to

engage or work with children or young people, citing a lack of training in dealing with these age groups as an issue, [McNichol, 2007].

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was adopted. This is because the study involves opinion of several individuals to be collected over a relatively short time. This enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive data on the age range of young adult patrons, resources and services provided for their use, the level to which the users are satisfied with the resources, and their perceived barriers to the use of these resources.

Population of the study

The population of the study comprised the registered young adult users of the Oyo State Public Library, Nigeria. A sample of 110 respondents was drawn and used for the study.

Instrument for data collection

Questionnaire designed based on the objectives of this study was used for data collection. The reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained using Ronbach's alpha as a result of the test, retest conducted. The questionnaire was in two parts, the first part was designed to obtain personal and demographic information of the respondents while the second part contained questions on their information preferences, the availability of resources and services and their satisfaction with these resources.

Data collection procedure

The administration of the questionnaire was made solely by the researcher and retrieved immediately. The Chief Librarian of the Oyo State Public Library as well as the librarians in charge of the branch libraries under study were contacted via telephone and appointments scheduled for the distribution of the questionnaires. A total of 110 questionnaires were administered on young adult users of the library. 108 questionnaires were retrieved out of which 92 were found usable. The respondents were assured that their responses will be treated as confidential and used for academic purposes only. The data collected was analyzed with the aid of percentages, tables, and cumulative frequency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age distribution of respondents

Age distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1. It is clear from the table that most of the respondents are in the age group of 16 -20 years representing 47.8%., followed by those in the age group of 21 - 25 years representing 31.5%. Only 15.2 % of the respondents were below 15years while 5.5% of the respondents were between 26-30 years.

Age Range (In Years)	Frequency	Percentage
Below 15 years	14	15.2%
16-20 years	44	47.8%
21-25 years	29	31.5%
26-30 years	05	5.5%
Total	92	100%

Gender distribution of respondents

The gender distribution of respondents is shown in Table 2. It may be seen from the table that the higher percentage the respondents numbering 50(54.4 %) are male while 42(45.6%) of them are female respondents.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	50	54.4%
Female	42	45.6%
Total	92	100%

Geographical location of respondents

The geographical location where the young adult users of public library come from is shown in Table 3. Majority of the respondents - 57.6%, come from urban area, while the remaining 42.4% come from the rural areas.

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Urban Area	53	57.6%
Rural Area	39	42.4%
Total	92	100%

Frequency of library visit by respondents

Frequency of visit to the public library by the respondents is shown in Table 4. Out of 92 respondents, the majority of 57.6% visit the library daily, 23.9% visit the library once a week, while 14.1% respondents visit the library once in a week, 6.5% visit once a month and 2.2% rarely visit the library.

Frequency of Library Visit	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	53	57.6%
Once a week	22	23.9%
Once in 2 weeks	10	14.1%
Once a month	05	6.5%
Rarely	02	2.2%
Total	92	100%

Purpose of library visit by respondents

The young adult users visit the public library for different purposes. From Table 5, majority of the respondents indicated that they visit the library to make use of textbooks (69.6%), novels and bestsellers (54.3%), interlibrary loan (63%), internet facilities (83.7%), job/career information (64.1%), health information (76.1%), extra mural classes (59.8%), audio visual materials (70.7%), and photocopy facilities (93.5%). On the other hand, fewer respondents stated that they go to the library to make use of newspapers, magazines and journals (32.6%), young adult space (26.1%), or to hang out with friends (22.8%). This may be due to unavailability or inadequacy of these resources, rather than lack of interest.

Purpose of Library Visit	Yes	No	Total
Textbooks	64(69.6%)	28 (30.4%)	92 (100%)
Books (Novels and Bestsellers)	50 (54.3%)	42 (45.7%)	92 (100%)
Newspapers, magazines, journals	30 (32.6%)	62 (67.4%)	92 (100%)
Inter-library loan	58 (63%)	34 (37%)	92 (100%)
Internet facilities	77 (83.7%)	15 (16.3%)	92 (100%)
To hang out with friends	21 (22.8%)	71 (77.2%)	92 (100%)
Job, career information	59 (64.1%)	33 (35.9%)	92 (100%)
Health information	70 (76.1%)	22 (23.9%)	92 (100%)
Young adult space	24 (26.1%)	68 (73.9%)	92 (100%)
Extra-mural classes	55 (59.8%)	37 (40.2%)	92 (100%)
To use photocopy facilities	86 (93.5%)	06 (6.5%)	92(100%)
To use audio-visual material, e.g. CD, DVD, etc	65 (70.7%)	27 (29.3%)	92 (100%)

Satisfaction of respondents with library resources and services

Table 6 shows the respondents' level of satisfaction with available resources and services. The Table shows that most of the respondents are satisfied with job/career information (58.7%), extra mural classes (45.7%), health information (54.3%), photocopy facilities (77.2%), library opening hours (86.9%), library rules and regulations (82.6%) and security of personal belongings (59.8%). Most respondents are partially satisfied with text books (65.2%), novels and bestsellers (62%), newspapers magazines and journals (65.2%), and audio visual materials (52.2%). Majority are not satisfied with interlibrary loan facilities (43.4%), internet facilities (64.1%) and the young adult space (92.4%).

Resources and services	Satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not satisfied	Total
Textbooks	25(27.2%)	60 (65.2%)	07 (7.6%)	92 (100%)
Books (Novels and Bestsellers)	05 (5.4%)	57 (62%)	30 (32.6%)	92 (100%)
Newspapers, magazines, journals	07 (7.6%)	60 (65.2%)	25 (27.2%)	92 (100%)
Inter-library loan	33 (35.9%)	19(20.7%)	40 (43.4%)	92 (100%)
Internet facilities	12 (13.1%)	21 (22.8%)	59 (64.1%)	92 (100%)
Job/career information	54 (58.7%)	30 (32.6%)	08 (8.7%)	92 (100%)

Health information	50 (54.3%)	30(32.6%)	12(13.1%)	92 (100%)
Young adult space	05 (5.4%)	02 (2.2%)	85 (92.4%)	92 (100%)
Extra mural classes	42 (45.7%)	13 (14.1%)	37(40.2%)	92 (100%)
Photocopy facilities	71 (77.2%)	15 (16.3%)	06 (6.5%)	92 (100%)
Audio-visual material, e.g. CD, DVD, etc.	22 (23.9%)	48 (52.2%)	22 (23.9%)	92 (100%)
Library opening hours	80 (86.9%)	12 (13.1%)	0 (0%)	92 (100%)
Library rules and regulations	76 (82.6%)	06 (6.5%)	10 (10.9%)	92 (100%)
Security of personal belongings	55 (59.8%)	28 (30.4%)	09(9.8%)	92 (100%)

Satisfaction of respondents with basic amenities and infrastructure of the library

Table 7 shows the respondents' level of satisfaction with basic amenities and infrastructure in the Library. Majority of the respondents were satisfied with the ventilation and lighting (54.3%), only partially satisfied with the reading rooms (55.4%), reading chairs and tables(53.2%), facilities for refreshments (43.5%), location of fire alarm systems (69.6%) and fire extinguishers(65.2%), and the toilet facilities (51.1%). From all indications, most of the respondents are either satisfied or partially satisfied with the amenities and infrastructure. Fewer numbers among the respondents expressed total dissatisfaction.

Amenities and infrastructure	Satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not satisfied	Total
Spacious reading rooms	22 (23.9%)	51 (55.4%)	19 (20.7%)	92 (100%)
Comfortable reading chairs and tables	33 (35.9%)	49 (53.2%)	10 (10.9%)	92 (100%)
Adequate ventilation and lighting	50 (54.3%)	27 (29.3%)	15 (16.4%)	92 (100%)
Facilities for refreshments	20 (21.7%)	40 (43.5%)	32 (34.8%)	92 (100%)
Fire alarm systems installed at key locations	12 (13%)	64 (69.6%)	16 (17.4%)	92 (100%)
Fire extinguishers installed at key locations	09 (9.8%)	60 (65.2%)	23 (25%)	92 (100%)
Clean toilet facilities	35 (38%)	47 (51.1%)	10 (10.9%)	92 (100%)

Satisfaction of respondents with library staff

Respondents were asked various questions to know how satisfied they are with library staff. Majority answered in the affirmative when asked if library staff were helpful and pleasant (52.2%), and in the negative when asked if staff was too busy to help (71.7%), or if they did not ask for help (57.6%). Majority also answered in the negative when asked if there was a young adult librarian available to help (88%), and if staff had the knowledge to help (80.4%).

Statements	Yes	No	Total
Staff was helpful and pleasant	48 (52.2%)	44 (47.8%)	92 (100%)
Young adult librarian was available to help me	11 (12%)	81(88%)	92 (100%)
Staff did not have the knowledge to help me	18 (19.6%)	74 (80.4%)	92 (100%)
Staff was too busy to help me	26 (28.3%)	66 (71.7%)	92 (100%)
I did not ask for help	39 (42.4%)	53 (57.6%)	92 100%

Respondents' perceived constraints to effective use of library resources and services

Perceived constraints to effective use of library resources by respondents are shown in Table 9. A higher percentage considered lack of qualified staff (59.8%), inadequate collections (53.3%) and inadequate internet facilities (51.1%) as major constraints, while library opening hours (83.7%), attitude of library staff (68.5%), location of the library (60.9%) and library rules and regulations (65.2%) were not considered constraints by a high percentage of respondents.

Statements	Yes	No	Total
Attitude of library staff	29 (31.5%)	63(68.5%)	92 (100%)
Lack of qualified staff	55 (59.8%)	37 (40.2%)	92 (100%)
Inadequate collections	49 (53.3%)	43 (46.7%)	92 (100%)
Inadequate internet facilities	47 (51.1%)	45(48.9%)	92 (100%)
Library opening hours	15 (16.3%)	77 (83.7%)	92 (100%)
Location of the library	36 (39.1%)	56 (60.9%)	92 (100%)
Library rules and regulations	32 (34.8%)	60 (65.2%)	92(100%)

Major findings

- Most of the young adult patrons of the Oyo State Public Library are within the age group of 16-20 years (47.8%), a higher percentage is male (54.4%), they mostly live in urban areas (57.6%), and visit the library daily (57.6%).
- The main reasons why the young adult patrons visit the library is to make use of the photocopy facilities (93.5%), the internet facilities (83.7%), health information (76.1%), audio visual materials (70.7%), to use textbooks (69.6%), for job/career information (64.1%), for inter-library loan services (63%), for extra mural classes (59.8%) and to borrow novels and bestsellers (54.3%).
- The young adult patrons mostly expressed satisfaction with library opening hours (86.9%), library rules and regulations (82.6%), photocopy facilities (77.2%), security of personal belongings (59.8%), job/career information (58.7%), health information (54.3%) and extra mural classes (45.7%). Most expressed only partial satisfaction with the provision of textbooks (65.2%), novels and bestsellers (62%) and audio visual materials 52.2%). A high percentage is also not satisfied with the young adult space (92.4%), the internet facilities (64.1%) and the inter-library loan services (43.4%).

- In expressing their level of satisfaction with the available infrastructure, mostly indicated satisfaction with the ventilation and lighting (54.3%). However, they were only partially satisfied with the location of the fire alarm systems (69.6%) and the fire extinguishers (65.2%), the reading rooms (55.4%), reading chairs and tables (53.2%), toilet facilities (51.1%) and facilities for refreshments (43.5%).
- In expressing their level of satisfaction with library staff, they overwhelmingly stated that staff were not too busy to help them (71.7%), and that staff were helpful and pleasant (52%). They however indicated there was no young adult librarian to attend to them (88%) and that staff mostly did not have the requisite knowledge to help them (80.4%).
- The respondents' perceived constraints to effective use of library resources and services included lack of qualified library staff (59.8%), and inadequate internet facilities (51.1%). Library opening hours (83.7%), attitude of library staff (68.5%), location of library (60.9%) and library rules and regulations (65.2%), were not considered major constraints by most of the respondents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that the Oyo State Public Library should make a concerted effort to improve its collections, resources and services in areas where patrons indicated dissatisfaction or partial satisfaction. Adequate funds should be made available for the acquisition of information resources and the provision of quality library services for young adults.
2. It is noted that fewer young adults in the rural areas use the public library. This may be due to the unavailability of public library services in these areas. Efforts should therefore be made to establish branches of public libraries in the rural areas in order to reach out to more young adults in these locations.
3. There should be continuing education of library staff in areas of child and young adult education. Also, staff awareness should be raised on issues surrounding children and young adults through training or briefing sessions. Librarians should also be trained in the use of the latest technologies and techniques for information dissemination, especially to the young adult.
4. There should also be periodic evaluations of library resources and services to ensure they meet the needs of the targeted users.

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