User Information Needs and Reference Services Satisfaction at Selected Federal Universities Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *One of the most important criteria for assessing a library is the level of satisfaction its users express with the service they get. The extent to which the library is able to anticipate user needs and integrate such predictions into collection development is a crucial aspect in influencing the level of satisfaction users have with the library's service. As a general concept, "user satisfaction" refers to how satisfied users are with a service or product they have used; as a more specific term, "library user satisfaction," it is used to describe how happy library patrons are with the library's collection and services. The study used a descriptive survey technique with a sample size of 288 postgraduate students randomly selected from four different Federal Universities in Northeast Nigeria. The data was collected by closed-ended questionnaire, and the resulting psychometrics include a CRV=1 and r-coefficient of 0.83. Frequency counts and percentages, together with chi-square tests at the 0.05 significance level, were used to examine the data. The study established that graduate students asked reference librarians for the same types of information but were dissatisfied with the level of service they received from librarians at their respective institutions. The results reveal a linear correlation between all the factors; therefore, it stands to reason that the chosen universities have the same information needs and levels of user satisfaction.*

KEY WORDS: *user satisfaction, library, reference librarian, reference service, graduate students*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important metrics for judging a library is the level of satisfaction its users report with the service they get. User satisfaction is highly correlated with a library's proactivity in anticipating user requirements and incorporating such predictions into collection growth. In a larger sense, user satisfaction is a metric for how happy users are with a service or product

they have used; in a more specific, technical meaning, however, it relates to how contented library patrons are with the services provided by libraries. Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu (2012) give supporting definition of user satisfaction as assessment of how far information service goes above user's expectations. An individual's degree of contentment with a library may be used to imply both their satisfaction with the library's services and their likelihood of returning, as stated by Joy and Idowu (2014). How satisfied customers are with the library is a function of several factors, including its staff, its collections, and its information infrastructure. These information infrastructures include information services, bibliographic verification and documentation, inter-library loan and document delivery services, current awareness services (CAS), user education, and selective dissemination of information services (SDI), reprographic and digital reference services. University libraries are organised in a manner that enables them to gather resources and develop facilities from which they may provide patrons with variety of services(Adamu & Maidabino, 2020).The library's worth is primarily determined by the quality of services provided to people who access the system manually or via remote sites (Asogwa et al., 2014). Understanding the information needs of library users on the quality of reference services is crucial, especially for academic libraries. User information needs are crucial in evaluating user satisfaction and service quality. Satisfaction, on the other hand, results from the fulfilment of expectations generated by perceptions. As a result, adhering to international standards such as those established by the IFLA and RUSA will improve library services.

Statement of the Problem
Reference service anchors upon a set of core functions, and inherent in the core functions are a collection of core values, including precision, accuracy, timeliness, authority, direction, access, individualization, and knowledge. Users often need to be satisfied with the reference services provided by library, which is determined by meeting the information need of users. Previous Studies have shown that most librarians do not use reference standards, which to a greater degree determined users' satisfaction by getting the desired information needs. It is on the background, that the study sought to investigate graduate students' information needs and satisfaction with library services in selected Federal Universities North East Nigerian.

Purpose of the study
The study aimed at investigating graduate students' information needs and satisfaction with reference services in North Eastern Nigerian Federal Universities libraries.

Objectives of the study
The study was guided by the following objectives
i. To determine how reference services meet the information needs of postgraduate students in the selected university libraries
ii. To establish the extent which users are satisfied with reference services provided by reference librarians

Research Questions
The research was guided by the following questions:
i. How have reference services meet the information need of postgraduate students in the selected federal university libraries?

ii. To what extent are users satisfied with reference services provided by librarians in the selected federal universities libraries?

Hypotheses
Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05α.
1. There is no significant relationship in postgraduate students' information needs across the selected universities. (H_{01}: $\beta \neq 0$)
2. There is no significant relationship in user's satisfaction of reference services across the selected universities. (H_{01}: $\beta \neq 0$).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information is fundamental to every facet of human life and one of the most essential necessities of humanity is the availability of accurate information. For each task a person or group sets out to do, information is an indispensable asset. According to Kadir and Hussin (2018), the collection and use of information is of utmost importance since information is a crucial resource for any civilization. The library's success hinges in large part on its capacity to serve the research demands of its users (Asogwa & Daniel, 2022). Crowley and Gilreath (2002) stated that consumers saw reference librarians and employees as usually kind and patient, but not always helpful, and extremely suspicious of student workers. The study further revealed that another significant element was staff and student workers unwillingness to assist patrons in need of any kind of reference service. The study also indicated that to fully understand and provide a high-quality reference service to library users, it is critical to analyze the reference service from the patrons' perspective. The study is relevant to the current study since both examine users' perceptions on information needs and satisfaction of quality service. Kekana and Kheswa (2020) established a divide between users' satisfaction and information needs that have affected user's satisfaction and quality of information

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research methodology, allowing the researcher to take a comprehensive approach; quantitative (surveys) were used to gather, analyse, and describe data about individuals, organisations, or phenomena. The descriptive research approach is efficient and effective for gathering descriptive data from demographic characteristics, resource availability, present practises, and requirements (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019). This method assists in the development of practical ideas and knowledge, as well as a clearer grasp of the study subject (Kinyua, 2019).

The research was carried out at the Modibbo Adama University of Technology in Yola, Adamawa State, the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in Bauchi, the University of Maiduguri in Borno State, and the Federal University Kashere, Gombe State all located in Northeastern Nigeria. The selection criteria included the institutions' long histories, convenient locations, extensive research programmes, and large student bodies. A total of 1459 graduate students from four different Nigerian universities in the region of North East Nigeria make up the study population.

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A total of 302 postgraduate were selected for the study, and 288 responded to the questionnaires. A simple random and purposive sampling method was used to select postgraduate students while the universities were purposively sampled based on the criteria. The sample was proportionally estimated as follows:

N x δ/ϑ: N= population of each university library, δ=total required sample size, ϑ=target Population. Four-item questionnaire was used to gather data, the level of agreement and satisfaction were rated using five-point scales respectively. The instrument was content validated and it yielded CVR=1, using Lawshe's (1975) method thus: CVR = $ne - \frac{N/2}{N/2}$: CVR= content validity ratio, ne=number of experts indicating essential on an item, N=total number of experts. The internal consistency was determined as follows:$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1}\left(1 - \frac{\Sigma s_y^2}{s_x^2}\right)$: α=Cronbach Alpha, k= Number of items, k-1= Number of items minus 1=constant, Σs_y^2=Sum of the item variance, s_x^2=Variance of the total score yielded 0.83. Data gathered was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages while, a test of statistical significance was determined using chi-square at 0.05 sig. MS Excel 11 was used for the data analysis, while results were presented in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

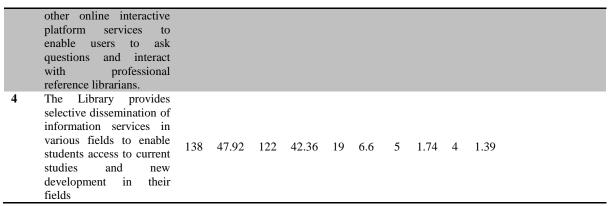### Information Needs of Post Graduate Students

According to Soni et al,(2020) postgraduate students need information for research, academic paper, and academic project completion by exploring library resources, internet facilities, conference and seminars, selective dissemination of information (SDI), and current awareness services (CAS). To determine the types of information graduate student's need, data was collected from 288 post-graduate students using a four-item questionnaire out of 302 post-graduate students. The data gathered was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages to handle the research question aligned to the objective, while chi-square at p ≤ 0.05. The results are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Information Needs of Post Graduate Students

S/N	Items	Responses n=288												
		SA (5)		A (4)		UD (3)		D (2)		SD (1)				
		F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	df	x^2	Sig.
1	The Library provides current awareness services to enable students to have access to print resources	136	47.22	138	47.92	11	3.82	3	1.04	1	0.35	12	0.007	0.05
2	The Library provides current awareness services to enable students to have access to electronic resources	128	44.44	150	52.08	6	2.08	2	0.69	2	0.69			
3	The Library provides "Ask a librarian" and	131	45.49	135	46.88	17	5.9	3	1.04	2	0.69			

	other online interactive platform services to enable users to ask questions and interact with professional reference librarians.									
4	The Library provides selective dissemination of information services in various fields to enable students access to current studies and new development in their fields	138	47.92	122	42.36	19	6.6	5	1.74	4	1.39

Source: Study Data 2022

The results indicate that (47.22%) of respondents strongly agreed that the university libraries offer current awareness services for postgraduate students to access print resources. This was backed by almost half of respondents (47.92%) who only agreed but not strongly that institutional libraries offer current awareness services to enable postgraduate students access current print materials. Few respondents (3.82%) neither agrees nor disagrees while, a limited proportion of the respondents (1.04%) confirmed that the institutional libraries do not provide current awareness services to enable postgraduate students have access to print resources. The smallest group of respondents (0.35%) strongly disagreed to the fact that the university libraries offer current awareness services for postgraduate students to access print resources.

The findings revealed that (44.44%) of respondents strongly agreed that the institutional library offers current awareness services that allow postgraduate students to access current electronic resources. Additionally, most respondents (52.08%) only agreed that the institution's libraries provide these current awareness services that allow postgraduate students to access current electronic resources. A small percentage of respondents (2.08%) did not react to the elements of the questionnaire, while a small percentage of respondents (0.69%) stated that the institution library lacks current awareness services to provide postgraduate students with access to electronic resources.

The results show that (45.49%) of respondents strongly agreed that the institutional libraries have "Ask a Librarian" and other online interactive platforms where students can ask questions and talk to professional reference librarians. Similarly, most of the people who answered (46.88%) agreed with this. Unfortunately, (5.90%) of the people who filled out the questionnaire did not answer because they were undecided. But only a small number of respondents (1.04%) had a different opinion about what information was needed. They said that the institutional libraries did not have "Ask a Librarian" services or other online interactive platforms where students could ask questions. This was confirmed by a small number of respondents (0.69%) who strongly disagreed. Experts have seen how important and useful web-based library services are, especially in this age of information, and have put in the work to make them available.

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The findings revealed that (47.92%) of respondents strongly agreed that the institutional libraries offer selective distribution of information services to help students have access to current studies and new developments in their fields of study and interest. In a similar manner, (42.36%) of the respondents also agree with the assertions made about the offer of selective distribution of information services by the institutional libraries. The number of respondents who were unsure about their preference was rather low (6.60%). However, a smaller percentage of respondents (1.74%) confirmed by disagreeing that postgraduate students are not provided access to selective dissemination of information services, and this was supported by even a smaller percentage of respondents (1.39%) who strongly disagreed to assertions but rather confirmed that postgraduate students are not provided access to current studies and new developments in their respective fields by the institutional libraries.

The study determined a statistically significant relationship among university postgraduate student's information need based on the university. The results x^2 0.0070 (12, N=288) = p ≤ 0.05 demonstrated that, the study rejects the null hypothesis therefore, there is a significant relationship between postgraduate student's information need across selected universities. This means that, the type of information postgraduate students requested from librarians in all the selected universities are related.

The research conducted by Huang (2010) indicates that most graduate students believed that demonstrating an understanding of readers' needs had a substantial influence on their academic achievement. Similarly, Dominic et al. (2010) claimed that CAS and SDI are crucial for success and survival in the contemporary environment. The current study agrees with all the studies mentioned above, indicating that SDI, CAS, and other internet information services (Ask a Librarian) are important ways of satisfying the information needs of postgraduate students.

User Satisfaction with Reference and Information Service
User's according to Ikolo (2015) are not satisfied with the way reference librarians respond to queries, time spent to make information available, level of competence in solving users' information needs and the general attitudes of reference librarians towards users. To ascertain user satisfaction on the quality of reference and information services provided by reference librarians, four-item questionnaires with five-point rating scale; Highly Satisfied (HS=5), Satisfied (S=4), Somewhat Satisfied (SS=3), Dissatisfied (D=2) and Highly Dissatisfied (HD=1) was administered to 302 postgraduate students, only 288 responded to the questionnaires. The data generated was organized and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages to answer the research question aligned to the study objective while, chi square at p ≤ 0.05 was used to establish a statistical significant relationship between postgraduate students satisfaction of reference services provided by librarians across the selected universities The results are presented in Table 4.15.

Table 4.2: User's Satisfaction with Reference and Information Services

S/N	Items	Responses n=288													
		HS (5)		S(4)		SS(3)		DS(2)		HD (1)				
		f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	df	x^2	Sig.
1	Reference librarians respond quickly to users' query face to face	0	0	0	0	4	1.39	141	48.96	143	49.65	12	0.1264	0.05
2	Reference librarians usually provide information to users on time	1	0.35	0	0	9	3.13	150	52.08	128	44.44			
3	Reference librarians are competent in solving users' information needs	2	0.69	1	0.35	10	3.47	152	52.78	123	42.71			
4	The General attitude and behaviour of Reference librarians towards users are commendable	2	0.69	1	0.35	8	2.78	142	49.31	132	45.83			

Source: Study Data 2022

The result revealed that, (48.96%) respondents described services rendered by reference librarians as dissatisfactory, (49.65%) of the respondents added that librarians often fail to respond quickly to users' queries thereby making the process of information seeking frustrated and highly dissatisfactory. Very few (1.39%) of the postgraduate students were somewhat satisfied with reference librarians' quality of service delivery. The study established that, limited numbers of postgraduate students (0.35%) were highly satisfied with the quality of reference and information services rendered as reference librarians usually provide information to users on time. Some postgraduate students (3.13%) were somewhat satisfied while, majority of the postgraduate students (52.08%) were dissatisfied and a lot (44.44%) of respondents confirmed untimely response by reference librarians in providing reference and information services therefore, highly dissatisfied. The study established that, only few (0.69%) postgraduate students were highly satisfied with the quality of reference and information services provided by reference librarians which, showed competence in solving users' information needs. Few (0.35%) respondents were dissatisfied with reference librarians' level of competence in solving users' information needs. Some (3.47%) respondents were somewhat satisfied while; over half of the respondents (52.78%) were dissatisfied with the quality of reference and information services provided as reference librarians showed incompetence in solving users' information needs. This was confirmed further by most (42.71%) of the respondents who were highly dissatisfied with the level of competence of reference librarians in solving users' information needed.

Findings of the study revealed that, little proportion (0.69%) of postgraduate students were highly satisfied with the general attitudes and behavior of reference librarians towards users and gained solidarity from very few (0.35%) respondents who are also satisfied. Few respondents (2.78%) were somewhat satisfied on the general attitude and behavior of reference librarians towards users are commendable although, most (49.31%) postgraduate students are dissatisfied with reference librarians' quality of reference and information services provided therefore, (45.83%) of postgraduate students were highly dissatisfied with the general attitudes of reference librarians towards users.

The study established a statistical significance among university postgraduate students' level of satisfaction with reference service provided by librarians based on the university. The results x^2 0.1264 (12, N=288) = p $\leq$ 0.05 indicated that, the study fails to reject the null hypothesis therefore, there is no significant relationship in the level of satisfaction of postgraduate students with reference services provided by librarians across the universities.

This means that, none of the selected university provides satisfactory reference services to users. The study disagrees with the findings of Onyeisi, Ajisafe and Toyese(2019) who found thatthe relationship between reference librarians and library users shows that librarians and users get along well. In addition, it turned out that the reference librarian gives personalised information services because each user has different information needs that may differ from the needs of other users.

CONCLUSION

The study evaluated postgraduate patrons' perspectives from four different federal university libraries in North East Nigeria on the reference services available at their institutional libraries. The study concluded that, postgraduate students' information needs are similar across universities which are guided by reference librarians through the application of wide range of strategies (library resources, internet access, conferences/seminars, selective dissemination of information (SDI), and current awareness services (CAS) to meet the information needs of postgraduate students. Most postgraduate students are dissatisfied with the reference services available in their institutional libraries. Therefore, there is the need for the relevant authorities to pay attention on the current issue of user satisfaction at the university libraries.

Recommendations
1.   In addition to the fundamental competencies that all librarians should possess, it is important for them to develop expertise in a wide range of other areas such communication skills, media literacy, and IT skills to mention a few. Library staff need to have strong communication, media literacy, and IT skills in order to adapt to the changing needs of their patrons and provide them with the best possible service. In terms of communication, librarians who are able to effectively convey information to their patrons are invaluable.
2.   Libraries need to ensure that their reference sections are well-stocked with current information resources, and staffed with competent reference librarians who comply to globally accepted standards in order to provide satisfactory reference services to users all times.
3.   Plans for service expansion must be considered. The reference staff must be trained in the art of customer service if they are to keep patrons satisfied throughout human interactions. Education about customer service must be included into library courses and programmes.
4.   The library's information literacy programme should target students who are most likely to learn about effectively using the library's many resources and services.
5.   More research should be done on the various facets of reference services. This should include the need to implement contemporary information and communication technology (ICT) based services, in reference services delivery.

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