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# Students' Level of Study and User of Library Resources in Nigerian Universities: A Comparative Study

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## Introduction

The emerging role of the libraries as an information professional in the new knowledge dispensation is enhanced by two main challenges. First, the value of information lies in the ability to access and adapt to suit new applications and improve the efficiency of existing systems. Universities are called upon not only to generate new knowledge but also to be able to market the innovations that have been generated out of knowledge transferred and adapted. Since this requires an atmosphere of research, libraries are challenged to provide access to relevant information by applying ICTs to facilitate quick, efficient access, integrate and repackage information for the end-user that will capacitate higher educational institutions to conduct research.

Second, the new knowledge economy emphasizes that knowledge from wherever it is produced can be transferred to where it is needed. Library use study as an aspect of users' studies is a vital aid for effective planning and management in academic libraries. Most evaluative studies on library use have always concentrated on students' use of academic libraries ([1]; [2]; [3]; [4];[5]) Though, students are an important part of the set up of academic institutions and perhaps the major users of academic library facilities, nevertheless, the staff of academic institutions, particularly the academic staff also use the library. The need for good libraries in higher institutions of learning cannot be over-emphasized, as the quality of any education depends on the library, not the library as a magnificent building but the use of it. It is important that libraries serving academic communities have the broadest possible collection of books and other essential materials. The academic library is an inexhaustible stone house of knowledge,

where one can go at will, unrestricted to help himself to the whole field of knowledge and practical life of the past, present and prognostications for the future. If a library is well stocked and the students know they can find more information than what they are taught, they will use the library maximally.

Writing on the importance of academic libraries use studies, [6] observed that studies of use and users are becoming fairly standard in library planning. He attributed this to a changing concept of what constitutes effective service. [7] believes that library use is an important measure of output or services provided by libraries and suggests that it is a possible index by which such measurement can be made. Highlighting the various characteristics of students' library use related to this study is that of [4] who surveyed the use made by students of the facilities at the University of Ilorin. The results showed that while 94.8% of the students use the facilities, only 5.2% have never used them. In the same vein, Nicholson and [8] studied the use of Massachusetts institute of Technology libraries. The result showed the 71.9% of the undergraduates and 52.4% of the graduate students use the library for class preparation. In the case of Pahlave University libraries, [9] showed that the majority of the students have difficulty in locating books and journals articles, but in [10] survey of the reading habits of the students of the University of Tehran, she found that primarily because of deficiencies in the educational system, students do not look at reading as a way of acquiring knowledge or developing character. Another study by [5] surveyed students' use of library, he discovered that students did not use library resources for various reasons, among which are students' ignorance resulting in wrong approaches in using the libraries. For instance, he found that about 69% indicated that they approached the library resources by first going to the shelves instead of the catalogues. [3] studied students' use of library resources at the University of Rhodes Island. The results showed that 60% of the students believed that they are effective seekers and users of library resources, only 40% were not satisfied with their search for resources in that library. In the longitudinal study of undergraduates' academic library experiences, [11] found that during the three years of the study, undergraduate students used the online or card catalogues more than any other library activity during their first year. This was followed by using the library to read or study. In the second year of the study, the computers in the library were the most used, followed by using the card catalogue or the OPAC, and using the library to read or study in that order. In the third year, using computers in the library was the activity students were most likely to engage in. Whitmore's study found surprising relationship between student's level of study and library use as it increases during each successive year of the study. Using the computers in the library and reading in the reserve and reference rooms also increased. Also, [12] study of disciplinary differences amongst students which canvassed over 500 students gets close but not really close enough for our purposes. She found that undergraduate in the soft disciplines (humanities, business, social sciences and education) compared to undergraduates in hard disciplines ( physical sciences and engineering) engaged in more information-seeking activities in addition to using the library as a place to read and study. [13] study also yields less than we might have hoped. The following is indicative: "First year undergraduates indicated that the route they choose in finding information was governed by time factors, conveniences of format and unwillingness to try the unfamiliar unless this was an explicit expectation". "Undergraduates who had progressed beyond the first year were more likely to mention some other quality criteria such as currency of information, the reliability of the source and the authority of the source, but time saving was important for them as well". [5] conducted a survey of student use of academic libraries, from his result, he found out that the fourth year students and above and most post graduate students stay longer in the library, he stated that majority of the postgraduate students go to the card catalogue first when ever they want to borrow books.

[14] assert that the library user is regarded as the most logical source to determine whether the library is playing its role satisfactorily or not. The resources of a library can influence its use as depicted by [15] which showed that students indicated that

they use the library more to read their personal books than for any other purposes. [16] examines patterns of use in a university library in Nigeria by analyzing user records and data which show low use of the library due to lack of awareness. [17] recommends a strategic plan that will develop and implement a study to identify user populations, their information needs and how well they are to be met. [18] et al. 2004 observed that, often students' information seeking behaviour involves active or purposeful information as a result of the need to complete course assignment, prepare for class discussions, seminars, workshops, conferences or write final year research papers. To [19] undergraduate students may be smart people, but they are still finding the process of research intimidating. [19] explained that these students do not learn the basic information skills; they only end up using trial and error methods of research. These limit their capabilities to satisfy their needs. [20] model noted that in the process of seeking information, problems are encountered. In another study conducted by [21] it was reported that first year undergraduate students reported that the entire participant felt that they had little need to look for information outside what faculty provided for them in their course and where information was needed. They felt they were able to acquire it using general search engines. Other findings from this research is that students participants were comfortable using technology to learn and that web modules could be used in the future to teach library instruction. Moreover, [22] in a study conducted in the University of Washington reported that undergraduates preferred to visit the library rather than to seek journals or books. [23] observed that undergraduate students in a focus group showed themselves to be inexperienced in online system. They were keen to receive instruction on how to find periodicals with (58%) and almost half of them wished to receive instruction on using electronic resources in science library. Authors like [24], [25], and [26] agree on the need to provide information for all categories of users.[27] notes that students must have access to all resources available in the library, [28] asserts that the traits that influence information requirements of library users are qualification, years of study, motivation and interest. The evaluation of the use of the academic libraries is a component of the planning process that provides librarians with feedback to improve the total effectiveness of the academic libraries in response to the needs and wants of their target user. The study of [29] of information seeking of undergraduate students at the University of Botswana found that the level of study and course of study significantly influence students' information seeking behaviour, also the students' level of study contributed more to the observed variation in information seeking pattern followed by course of study. It was noted earlier in this review that research conducted on library use by undergraduate students as indicated by [30] in her study of use of print and electronic resources by agricultural science students in Nigerian universities and some studies in Botswana [29] have shown that undergraduate students do not use most of the library information resources, and also, there was underuse of these library resources. It may be true that students are experiencing technical problems in accessing information resources, in addition with their lack of basic knowledge and awareness of the resources. Therefore, undergraduate students' level of study and poor use of library resources was captured and considered the biggest problem to be examined.

## Problem Statement

Library use study as an aspect of users' studies is a vital aid for effective planning and management in academic libraries. Most evaluative studies on library use have always concentrated on students' use of academic libraries. No comprehensive study has been conducted on the relationship between the level/year of study of students and the use of library resources. The usage pattern of library resources by level of students and the satisfaction they derive in using the library are the main focus of this research.

## Significance of the Research

Libraries are primary resources for conducting research. The results of this study will reveal the extent of use of library information resources by undergraduate students as regard their level/year of study; also, it will reveal the level of satisfaction by the students when using library resources. The results of the study will provide the basis of importance of library use by students in Nigerian universities and could have practical implications for university library management with respect to awareness of facilities available in the library which would enhance its usage by the users, insights into patterns and extent of use will help in decision making as level of awareness of library facilities to students is concerned.

## Originality/Value

This paper establishes the importance of a cross-sectional study in understanding the difference in students' use of library resources in different years of their studies.

## Scope of the Research

The study will focus on investigating students' level of study and use of library information resources using University of agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB), University of Ibadan, (U.I) and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye (OOU) as case study. The extent of usage of library resources as the students get to the next level in their academic study in the three universities will be addressed.

## Research Question

The main research question for this study is: How does undergraduates' library use change during each year of their education?

## Objectives of the Study

- To determine the frequency of library use by the students
- To determine the extent of use of library resources by the students
- To determine the use of library resources by the level of study of the students
- To determine the students' satisfaction based on relevant information used
- To determine the relationship between level of study of the students and use of library resources.

## Methodology

This study was carried out during 2004/2005 academic year and was limited to undergraduate students in three Nigerian Universities: These are University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB); University of Ibadan (U.I.) and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ayetoro campus (OOU). A random sampling technique was used to select 1300 students from these three universities (U.I; 500, UNAAB; 400, OOU; 400). The questionnaire was the only instrument used for gathering information and it was structured to identify some important variables associated with the changes in the use of library resources as the students get to the next level of study. The author personally went to administer the copies of questionnaire to all the respondents in their various universities with the assistance of library officers in each university. Four hundred copies each of the questionnaire were distributed at UNAAB and OOU, while 500 copies were distributed at the U.I.

Out of 1300 copies of the questionnaire administered to the three universities, the total of 912 copies was returned constituting a 70.15% response rate. Out of the

400 copies each distributed at the UNAAB and OOU, 278(69.5%) and 262(65.5%) copies were returned respectively, while at UI, 372(74.4%) copies were returned from the 500 copies of questionnaire distributed. Data collected were analyzed and results tabulated with the relevant headings using percentages and frequencies. The hypothesis guiding the study was that there is no significant relationship between the use of library resources and academic level of study of undergraduate students.

## Findings

### Frequency of library use

When students were asked to state the frequency of their library use in all the three universities, 138(15.1%) said they used the library 2-3 times daily; 362(39.7%) said Daily; 132(14.5%) said occasionally while 280(30.7%) said When necessary. Table II

### Extent of use of library materials by respondents

The extent of use of library resources either in print or electronic form in each of the three universities studied was analyzed. At U.I, 181(49%) said they made use of it very often, 120(32%) said often, 40(11%) said occasionally while only 31(8%) said they never made use of resources in the library. At UNAAB, 110(40%) indicated very often, 95(34%) said often, 53(19%) said occasionally, while 20(7%) indicated never. In case of OOU, 60(23%) indicated very often, 56(21%) said often, 88(34%) said occasionally while 58(22%) said never. Table III.

### Use of library resources by level of respondents

Students were asked to state the extent of use of library resources according to their level or year of study. At U.I, the use increases from 100L to 500L (14.8% to 25.5%); also, at UNAAB, it increases at each successive year (14% to 25.9%) but at OOU, the case was different, there was a surprising result, 300L students used library resources more than 500L students. Table IV.

### Relationship between level of study of respondents and use of library resources.

From Table V, the chi-square test value at the degree of freedom (df) of 4 at 0.05 level of significance in UNAAB is 9.49 while the chi-square calculated value is 3.653. Since the X-tabulated value is greater than the X-calculated value, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the use of library materials and academic level of study of undergraduate students is therefore accepted. Also at U.I, the chi-square tabulated value of 9.49 is greater than chi-square calculated value of 2.783; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. But the case was different at OOU when the chi-square calculated value of 13.926 is greater than chi-square tabulated value of 9.49, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which implies that there was relationship between the use of library materials and the academic level of undergraduate students. Table V.

### Satisfaction based on relevant information used by the students

Students were asked to base their satisfaction on relevant information used by the students. The table shows that at U.I, 208(55.9%) respondents indicated that they were very satisfied. This however constituted the majority. 157(42.2%) respondents indicated satisfied while only 7(1.9%) indicated not satisfied. At UNAAB, 176(63.3%) said very satisfied, 68(24.5%) said satisfied while 34(12.2%)

said not satisfied. At OOU, the majority 110(42%) indicated satisfied while 62(24%) and 90(34%) indicated very satisfied and not satisfied respectively. Table VI.

TABLE I: Copies of questionnaire returned at each university

Institution	Questionnaire returned	%
UNAAB	278	30.5
U.I	372	40.8
OOU	262	28.7
Total	912	100.0

UNAAB- University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.

U.I- University of Ibadan.

OOU- Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye.

TABLE II: Frequency of library use

Library use	No of Respondents	%
2-3 times daily	138	15.1
Daily	362	39.7
Occasionally	132	14.5
When necessary	280	30.7
TOTAL	912	100

TABLE III: Extent of use of library materials by respondents

	U.I		UNAAB		OOU	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Very often	181	49	110	40	60	23
Often	120	32	95	34	56	21
Occasionally	40	11	53	19	88	34
Never	31	8	20	7	58	22

TABLE IV: Use of library resources by level of study of respondents

Level of respondents	U.I		UNAAB		OOU	
	No of respondents	%	No of respondents	%	No of respondents	%
100L	55	14.8	39	14.0	37	14.1
200L	69	18.5	45	16.2	68	26.0
300L	72	19.4	59	21.2	70	26.7
400L	81	21.8	63	22.7	39	14.9
500L	95	25.5	72	25.9	48	18.3
TOTAL	372	100.0	278	100.0	262	100.0

TABLE V: Relationship between level of study of respondents and use of library resources

University	Chi-square value	df	$\alpha$ -level at $P < 0.05$	Decision
UNAAB	3.653	4	9.49	NS
OOU	13.926	4	9.49	S
UI	2.783	4	9.49	NS

Key: S= Significant, NS= Not Significant

TABLE VI: Satisfaction based on relevant information used by the students

Level of satisfaction	U.I		UNAAB		OOU	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Very satisfied	208	55.9	176	63.3	62	24
Satisfied	157	42.2	68	24.5	110	42
Not satisfied	07	1.9	34	12.2	90	34

## Discussion

The library serves as repositories of accumulated knowledge and can be regarded as a reservoir of information where a large fact of knowledge is being supplied to information seekers. The students are the major users of library in an academic environment. The research studied the frequency of library use by the students, from the three universities studied, majority of the respondents visited the library to made use of its materials, this is in line with the study of [31] who reported that a student who does not appreciate the value of library is handicapped and visits the library to read only.



The library collection is basically on print and electronic resources which are available for the users, the extent of use of these resources by the students in the three universities was analyzed; At U.I and UNAAB, there was extensive use while at OOU, they made use of it occasionally, this substantiates the findings of [4] who surveyed the use made to facilities by students of University Ilorin.

The findings showed that there are differences in the extent to which sources of information are used by students in different years of their study. The use of library resources as it was stated by the respondents, increases as they get to the next level in the two universities (i.e. U.I and UNAAB), this substantiates the study of [11] who reported that library use increases at each successive year but in the case of OOU, only part three students used more resources. This might be due to students' ignorance resulting in wrong approaches in using the libraries as indicated by [5]. Also, the study of [13] reported that the activities the students went to perform in the library were different and the route they choose in finding information was governed by time factors, conveniences of format and unwillingness to try the unfamiliar resources unless this was an explicit expectation. [13] also stressed that undergraduates who had progressed beyond first year were more likely to mention some other quality criteria such as currency of information, the reliability of the source and the authority of the source, but time saving was important for them as well. In the same vein, [14] conducted a survey of students of academic libraries, from his result, he found that the fourth year students and above stay longer in the library. In case of OOU, there was underuse of library resources, this substantiates the study of [30] who study the use of print and electronic resources in Agricultural universities and discovered the underuse of library resources at OOU and she attributed it to relocation of the campus and the library was yet to be equipped at the time of the study, and also the study of [31] who pointed out that libraries always have low patronage when they are not adequately equipped to effectively provide the range of services entrusted on them.

There was no significant relationship between the level of study of the students and the use of the library materials in the two universities implying that students can make use of the resources in the library as at when due regardless of their level of study as [27] opined that students must have access to all resources available in the library and [28] asserted that the traits that influence information requirements of library users are qualification, year of study, motivation and interest. Quality of services provided by the library was rated effective; the information resources were to a large extent current. These probably explain why users were satisfied with information resources and services provided. This level of satisfaction corroborates the findings of [3] who studied students' use of library resources at the University of Rhodes Island. The results showed that 60% of the students believed that they are effective seekers and users of library resources, only 40% were not satisfied with their search for resources in that library.

## Implications of the Study

The study revealed some fundamentals facts about the use of library resources by the level of study of the students of U.I, UNAAB and OOU. The study revealed that the resources are being used by the students in the pursuit of their academic career at the two universities (UI and UNAAB) and use increases as their level of study increases while at OOU, even though there was use in the library resources, but the level of usage is low when compared with the two other universities studied. Consequently, only part three students used more resources, this implied that due to lack of new technology facilities in their library, the students in their forth and fifth year has no access to current information in their study and as a result will be unable to compete with their colleagues outside in both academic knowledge and expertise. However, unless the library agitate for more funds to purchase modern IT equipment and software, make the public awareness of newly purchased library facilities either in print or electronic and familiarize students with

all these new technologies by organizing a seminar for them or make available a kind of guideline on library use in form of a handbook, unless they provide them with all these, they may find it extremely difficult to benefit from the potentials the new technology has to offer and the library will not be used to the maximum.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that there was underuse of library resources either print or electronic format in one of the universities studied as far as year of study of students is concerned when compared with the other two universities (U.I & UNAAB), where there was enough use of the resources. There was also increase in library use as students get to higher level. The study recommends that awareness be made to students on library use and also a guideline in form of a booklet be made available to students in order to use the resources to the maximum.

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