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INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF BENUE STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated information needs and seeking behavior of children in public libraries: A case study of Benue state public library. Five (5) objectives with corresponding research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted survey research design, the population of the study was 490 children registered with the Benue state library Board headquarters, Makurdi. However, a sample sized of 220 were drawn using simple random sampling and Taro Yamene's formula was used to determine the sample size from the population. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire developed by the researcher and validated by two experts who are professional librarians. Data collected for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and mean scores to answer the research questions. Findings of the study revealed that children needs information on child development and skills acquisition, some children need information on culture of the people, among others. Findings of the study also revealed the ways in which children seek information in public libraries in Benue state to include: consulting the children librarian, personal interaction with public library staff, children seek information by asking questions, browsing the book shelves, reporting to staff, complaining, among others. Furthermore, findings of the study revealed the sources of information available to children in Public libraries in Benue state to include; audio/ talking books, graphic novels and manga, story and information books for all ages, among others. Findings of the study also revealed that the information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state were: picture books, board books for babies and toddlers, talking books, among others. Findings of the study further revealed that lack of awareness/ orientation programme, inadequate search skills, lack of information literacy programme, among others were the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue state. Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study; the management of Benue state library board should organize awareness/ orientation programme for children to enable them have knowledge of available sources in the children's section of the library, among others.

KEYWORDS: Information needs, Information Seeking Behaviour, Children, Public Library.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the creation of history, man had generally requires information for his survival, information is required in decision making and in other aspects of life. To function and to be relevant, every society needs information. Hence information is said to be data of value in decision making. It is critical resources that enable an organization to function and flourish. It is first among the other corporate resources because decisions relating to others depend on it. But the collection, processing and dissemination of information are not trouble free. This is basically due to the nature of information. Information is indispensable to all processes and is essential to natural development. It is both a national and international resource for social political, religious, economic, cultural as well as technological development. Information is important as the three basic necessities of life which are water, food and shelter and so should be given enough priority in order to achieve what is meant for. It is significant to note that information is useless unless it is used however, before information can be made use of, it has to be provided and the user of it has to be aware of it. In other words, the use of information depends on its availability and accessibility to users.

Information is the act of informing or the condition of being informed or the communication of knowledge. The American library association glossary of library and information science (ALA) (2000) define information as all ideas, greats and imaginative works of mind which have been communicated, recorded, published and distributed formally or in formally in any format. The new Webster's dictionary 11th edition, 2003 defined information as, the communication of news, knowledge obtained by search, study etc. it can also be considered as knowledge communicated concerning some particular facts, subjects or events. Information reduces uncertainty and adds to human knowledge. Those that are pointers to other information and their sources which it provides substantive information that is information itself. Information is regarded as resources for use, and its generation and use for efficiency and effectiveness is a very demanding and stressful task because any information that is not organized for future use may be wasted. Also, the relevance attached to information makes people to seek it in diverse ways and for diverse needs. Information as a concept is not new to the field of library and information science and its existence is designed to solve problems when it is needed and source by individuals on a day-to-day basis. According to Edewor, Emeka-Ukwu and Egreajena (2016), the whole world needs and seeks information to survive and thrive in the 21st century with professionals, teachers, students and even the elderly desiring information for their everyday activities. Researchers from different disciplines working at the various Federal institutes in Nigeria are no exception to the popular craving for information for their numerous projects geared towards significantly contributing to sustainable national development. Chowdhury (2004) and Ikoja-Odongo and Mostert (2006) set forth that an information need may arise when an individual recognizes that his or her current state of knowledge is insufficient to cope with the task at hand, to resolve conflicts - or to fill a void in some area of knowledge. Similarly, Ingwersen and Järvelin (2005) and Nicholas (2000) point out that information needs have to do with an identified or recognized knowledge gap that is available to an actor/ user or an anomaly which an actor/user wishes to resolve. Choo, Detlor and Turnbull (2000) maintain that information needs are frequently thought of in terms of a person's cognitive needs - gaps or anomalies in the state of knowledge or understanding that

may be represented by questions or topics. These questions or topics will definitely lead to users of information seeking information. In the same vein, Wilson (2006) opines that when we speak of users' information needs, "we should not have in mind a concept of a fundamental, innate, cognitive or emotional need for information, but a concept of information as a means towards an end of satisfying such fundamental needs". He stresses that as part of the search for the satisfaction of these needs, an individual may engage in information-seeking behaviour. He further states that it is advisable to remove the term "information needs" from our professional view point and rather speak about "information seeking towards the satisfaction of need".

Information seeking involves the act of reaching out for totality of information-related products and services that researchers may perceive to have a potential purpose in filling the gaps in their current knowledge regarding the research they are carrying out. Information-seeking behaviour can be regarded as a response to information needs which an information seeker performs as depicted by Wilson (2000) as a purposive-seeking action for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goals. According to Acheampong and Dzandu (2015), the need to be an informed and knowledgeable individual leads to the process of identifying information needs. This process does not stand alone without the individuals knowing the way they articulate, seek, evaluate, select and use the information, which is commonly referred to as "informing-seeking behaviour" being sought for. Information-seeking actions entail the actions that researchers are willing to take in the course of carrying out their research projects in order to fill research knowledge gaps.

Information needs and information seeking behaviour of children is defined as the provision of desirable, up to date factual information to the children at the appropriate time to enhance their welfare and ways or patterns pursued by them in an attempt to resolve an information need or needs. Access to information is one of the human rights and each user of it should be able to get the right information he desires at the right time and place in the way he needs it.

Information as a valuable commodity can be got from the library among other places and it is necessary that librarians satisfy user's needs. In public libraries, the notion of book acquisition or children literature is important. As a result, there is need for public libraries to meet the information needs and information seeking behaviour of children. This may not only enhance performance of the children, but would go a long way in improving the services rendered to children in public libraries. In addition, it would make for easy storage, processing, retrieval of information, dissemination and use.

As information literacy becomes vital in today's world, the public library has a responsibility in ensuring that the specific information and reference needs of children are adequately addressed. Children as reference client require skilled and considerable assistance to locate information relevant to both their perceived and real needs. The public libraries can meet these needs through the children section of the public library. A children section of the public library is an important unit to which children have easy access to information and use. It provides information in various formats. The children section provides pre-school programmes, storytelling, reading competitive, riddles and joke among others. The library facilitates education of children. It also performs vital function such as informational, educational, cultural

and recreational services. Public libraries can play a major role in fostering in children the desire for education and helping them develop the skills for obtaining the kind of ever changing knowledge necessary to survive and prosper. Children by all means need information knowledge sake, self-development, skill acquisition and to carry out a given assignment.

The public has children's library section which provides educational, recreational, and cultural resources for children aged 6 to 11. It has a large collection of picture books, story books, nonfictional books, and multimedia materials etc. The main objective of this section is to develop children's reading habits, research, and creativity skills through different programs and activities. In addition to the reading habits, the section has a computer lab, an activity room, a storytelling and puppet show corner, and a multimedia corner. A special section is dedicated to children with different types of disabilities. Several activities are offered by the staff of children section on a daily basis, such as storytelling, puppet shows, and arts and crafts. Children's book authors are often invited to read to the children.

Children seek information, just like adults, for a variety of leisure purposes and to help them with their school-based assignments. Also like adults, for this information they turn to printed sources such as books and magazines, and increasingly to digital sources, especially the Web. Yet despite these shared information needs, children differ from adolescents, as well as adults, especially in terms of their level of cognitive development and affective behaviour and therefore in their approach to seeking, evaluating, and using information resources. They should be perceived, therefore, as a distinct user community when it comes to information-seeking behavior. Children, like adults, seek information from wide variety of sources.

The information needs of children can broadly be divided into two categories: those with relating to education and those relating to their individual leisure interests. In an educational context, the information need is often imposed by the teacher (Gross, 2000). One objective in the modern school system is to develop higher order thinking skills, an objective that necessitates the use of instructional strategies that encourage discovery and investigation.

The information-seeking behaviour of children has attracted considerable attentions from researchers, especially in digital environments. Traditionally, children looked to books and magazines to meet their various information needs. In the last decade of the twentieth century, CD-ROM experienced a brief popularity as a delivery vehicle (especially encyclopedias) for children's information. In the current century, however, it is the Web that increasingly has become an important information resource for this age- group. Information seeking, however, whether from printed or digital sources, is by no means a simple and straightforward task for children, as many studies have revealed.

Information is needed and sought for a purpose; information seeking is a means and not an end in itself. Traditionally, information science has had relatively little to say about the final stage the use of the retrieved information and this is especially the case when the use happens to be children. Research from the discipline of education is more plentiful, but tends to be restricted to information uses in educational rather the leisure contexts.

The ultimate goal of the educational system is to maximize possibilities for student learning. Traditionally requiring students to acquire discipline-bound knowledge from

"authoritative" resources such as the teacher or the textbook met this goal. Information was used in an assignment, often according to strict guidelines. Newer conceptions of learning require students to collaborate on multidisciplinary tasks using multiple information resources and by regulating their own learning (Windschitl, 2017). Information technologies can facilitate the latter objective but are no guarantee of a successful learning outcome. The relationship between information seeking, information use and knowledge building require much more exploration by researchers.

In Nigeria, and particularly Benue state, information seeking behavior of children remains poor and poses the greatest challenge to reading culture and poor academic performance of school children in Nursery and primary schools across the state.

Despite the huge amount of financial and material resources invested for the development and growth of Public libraries in Benue state for past years through the Benue State Library Board Headquarters, Makurdi, preliminary observation by the researcher have shown that children are underutilizing the library. If this scenario is not properly addressed the aims and objectives of establishing public libraries by the Benue state government will be defeated and the larger society will suffer in the nearest future. Could it be that children do not have information needs or finds it difficult to go about seeking for information they need? This question bothers the researcher which warranted this investigation. It is in light of this that the study sought to investigate the information needs and information seeking behavior of children in public libraries using the Benue state public library as case study.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Most children do not get the information resources and services they need in the Public library and they are disappointed to the extent that, most of them are not prepared to use the library again. Despite the huge amount of money invested in public libraries by the previous and present administrations in Benue state to encourage reading culture among children in the state, preliminary observation have shown that parents/ guardians do complain that the information needs of their children are not met in Benue state public library. And that, their children do not also wished to revisit the library as a result of poor quality of children related literatures available for them to study. As a result of this, children get disappointed for not getting what they desired, their needs not met and their information seeking behaviour not identified. If this situation continue it will have a negative effect on the future of the children who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow. This scenario if not properly addressed with stiff resistance could result to poor academic performance of the children in Nursery and Primary schools across the state, low patronage of the children section of the library, as well as children developing poor attitude towards the library and reading in general. If this further continue the aims and objectives of establishing public libraries within the state will be defeated. The resultant effect of this will be detrimental to the socio-economic development of the state and Nigeria as a whole in the nearest future. This is a source of concern to the researcher. Hence, the need to carry out this investigation to address the issues raised above.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to identify information needs and seeking behavior of children in public libraries; using Benue state public library as a case study. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identifying the information needs of children in public libraries in Benue state.
2. Identify the ways in which children seek information in public libraries in Benue state.
3. Identify source of information available to children in public libraries in Benue state.
4. Ascertain the types of information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state.
5. Find out the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources and services in public libraries in Benue state.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

1. What are the children's specific information needs in public libraries in Benue state?
2. What are the ways in which children seek information in public libraries in Benue state?
3. What are the sources of information available to children in public libraries in Benue state?
4. What are the types of information children often source in public libraries in Benue state?
5. What are the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources and services in public libraries in Benue state.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The content scope of this research is limited to information needs and information seeking behaviour of children in Benue State public library. The geographical scope of this study is Makurdi local government area of Benue state. Population scope of the study is children who are registered with the Benue state Library Board Headquarters, Makurdi.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 Concept of Information needs

Information is said to be data of value in decision making. It is critical resources that enable an organization to function and flourish. It is first among the other corporate resources because decisions relating to others depend on it (Akagha, 2015). But the collection, processing and dissemination of information are not trouble free. This is basically due to the nature of information. Information is indispensable to all processes and is essential to natural development. It is both a national and international resource for social, political, religious, economic, cultural as well as technological development. Information is important as the three basic necessities of life which are water, food and shelter and so should be given enough priority in order to achieve what is meant for. It is significant to note that information is useless unless it is used however, before information can be made use of, it has to be provided and the user of

it has to be aware of it. In other words, the use of information depends on its availability and accessibility to users.

Information is the act of informing or the condition of being informed or the communication of knowledge. The American library association glossary of library and information science (ALA) define information as all ideas, facts and imaginative works of mind which have been communicated, recorded, published and distributed formally or informally in any format. The new Webster's dictionary defines information as, the communication of news, knowledge obtained by search, study etc. it can also be considered as knowledge communicated concerning some particular facts, subjects or events. Information reduces uncertainty and adds to human knowledge. Information can be in two forms. Those that are pointers to other information and their sources which it provides substantive information that is information itself. Information is regarded as resources for use, and its generation and use for efficiency and effectiveness is a very demanding and stressful task because any information that is not organized for future use may be wasted. Also, the relevance attached to information makes people to seek it in diverse ways and for diverse needs. Edom (2016) stressed that information is normally intended for use rather than interest. It is sought by their final users for particular purpose in particular circumstances. It is of maximum potential use to person who wants it when it meets his need not only in terms of general, subjects too.

Needs can be seen as a requirement from subsistence or for carrying out some function or activities. Thus, information needs refer to information demands, requirements, wants or desires for some general and specific purpose. Need in relation to information as: a state of lack of desirable requisition or commodity i.e. information necessary to deal with a situation as an individual deems fit (Ogbonna, 2016). Information users need information for problem solving, current awareness, recreational purposes and for up-dating their knowledge. Information need is construed in the sense of data or set of data specially required that will enable the user to make appropriate decision on any related problem facing him or her at a particular time (Solomon, 2012). In the same vein, Case cited by Tamen (2019) described information need as an individual or groups desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. Thus, information needs refer to information demands, requirements, wants or desires for some general and specific purpose. Kadiri cited by Musa (2018) describes need in relation to information as: a state of lack of desirable requisition or commodity i.e. information necessary to deal with a situation as an individual deems fit.

2.1.2 Concept of Information Seeking Behaviour

It is a truism that children engage in information seeking in order to attain set objectives and solve certain problems. While seeking for this information, children exhibit several verbal and non-verbal cues. These behavioural tendencies constitute information seeking behaviour. Wilson cited by Job and Nwokedi (2020) observed that in the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library) or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web). Information seeking behaviour has been differently and separately defined by several authors as a conduct (Uhegbu, 2011, Ossai, 2011); as an activity and as an action (Majid and Kassim, 2010). As a conduct, (Uhegbu, 2011) described it as the way an individual conducts himself or acts when looking for or receiving or

acquiring information. This conduct constitutes his utterances, gestures, anxiety or anger displayed by an information seeker in his effort to purchase, acquire or receive news, data, stories or anything that may inform or misinform his knowledge or understanding of a concept. Information seeking behaviour as an activity denotes several procedures of identifying search terms, choosing information locating tools, carrying out the search, locating the information, retrieval and eventual utilization. As an action, information seeking behaviour involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information and finally use this information to satisfy his or her information needs. Invariably, this also include the feelings and emotions exhibited in the assessment of the information and decision stage of either satisfaction/dissatisfaction with obtained information or re-search procedure.

Information seeking behaviour from Kaur and Lal (2016) is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. Ogba, (2013) defined information behaviour as actions, sentiments, mood swings and psychological reasoning carried out in the mood of information seeking by individuals; before, during and after information seeking which determines the environment of research, the information source, the information sourced and taken, the ability to conclude research and the mode of using the information sourced.

Whether or not information needs are pursued depends on the individual's ability to identify their need and then to express the need in terms that are searchable by themselves or a third party (Sinha, 2015). Smyth cited in Musa (2018) remarked that the information seeking pattern of an individual is determined by the individual information environment, which consist of: background and characteristics of the individual; the nature and type of information need with which he/she is confronted; the type of availability of information providers; information providers capability in responding to a request and the degree and satisfaction perceived by an individual with the ability of one or more information providers to respond to his/her information needs. Information seeking according to Smyth cited in Musa (2018) is a basic activity indulged in by all people and manifested through a particular behaviour. It is also an aspect of scholarly work of most interest to academic librarians who strive to develop collections, services and structures that facilitate information seeking. In the words of Aina (2004) the information seeking behaviour of users depends on education, access to library and the length of time a user devote to information seeking. He went further to say that no matter how comprehensive the resources and services of a library are, it is important that the services are publicized widely so that users could seek information from the libraries. Information seeking behaviour is thus the behavioural pattern exhibited in a bid to acquire certain information necessary to bridge a gap in one's knowledge.

2.1.3 Concept of Public Libraries

A library is defined as a place, building or room where a collection of books are kept for use. Libraries all over the world are regarded as a national infrastructure, repository of information and thus, act as catalyst for empowerment. The encyclopedia Americana cited in Ape (2011) defined library as the "collection of books and other forms of records, housed, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of the people for information, knowledge, recreation, and aesthetic enjoyments". Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) defined a library

as social institutions, created to conserve knowledge, preserve the cultural heritage, and provide information; under gird and underpin education and research; and serve as foundations of recreation. In other ways, it is called an Omnibus for the single fact that its users / readership is not restricted (i.e.) it accepts and provides services to every person that may approach it (Aju & Karim, 2014). According to the authors, a public library is normally established by state government and may have branches in the local government areas so that both urban and rural dwellers may have access to its resources and services. The information resources stocked by public libraries includes print and non-print materials which may include books, reference tools, fiction and non-fiction materials and a number of audio-visual materials.

Public libraries are libraries funded by governments (either at local government level, state government level or federal government level) with the tax-payers' money and with the backing of a legislation. Thus, it is free and open to all without any discrimination in terms of age, sex, status or religion. Apotiade cited by Olanongbe et al (2013) submitted that a public library is wholly designed for the purpose of rendering information services to the general public irrespective of status, occupation, sex, age, and these services are meant to be free or attract little fee. Nuhu cited by Sinha (2015) posited that public libraries exist primarily to serve the entire members of its locality referred to as its general public. Atuti (2008) submitted that public libraries have long been viewed as knowledge institutions because they provide the public with spaces for information and learning and are accessible to all groups of society, regardless of gender, age and ethnic affiliation. Public libraries are significant institutions in the development of individual and society. In Nigeria, many users use a public library for the purpose of self-improvement because they are concerned with information and education..

2.3 Empirical Studies

A study was conducted by Abdullahi, Igbinovia and Solanke (2015) on assessment of information needs and seeking behaviour of undergraduates in University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. The results of study showed that the information resources available to the respondents include books, periodicals (e.g. journals, magazine and newspaper etc.) and internet services provided at the e-library. The information sources available to them are formal and informal which includes print, electronic, multimedia and audio-visual. Respondents prefer information materials with appropriate titles during their visit to the library and they adopt self-help to locate information they need as they rarely use the catalogue to retrieving information materials. Furthermore, other places where information is sought include the cyber cafes, mobile surfing, online databases and personal collection. Steps taken when information is needed is usually done by asking experts in their field of study and discussion with their colleagues while the usage of information is channelled towards general awareness, preparing reading and for writing paper presentation. However, factors affecting respondent's usage of information ranges from inadequacy of relevant library equipment, inadequate relevant library materials, lack of time, procrastination and a host of others.

A study was conducted by Sinha (2015) titled a study on information needs and information seeking pattern of public library users of Barak Valley, South Assam. The survey finding revealed that majority of the respondents (47.0 %) belongs to the age group of 16-25 years. The study showed that the awareness about the rural/public library was more among the

respondents and the highest numbers (34.53%) of the respondents visit public library once a week. It also highlighted that most of the respondents (40.29%) prefer to spend at least one hour in the rural public library. The study also reveals the fact that the maximum demand for information from the respondents (88.44 %) were from employment related information. The television channels (100.0 %) and Newspapers (98.56 %) are two important sources from where the majority of public library users (67.44%) get their desired information needs. Majority of the respondents (86.33 %) say that the information given by various sources are moderate. The study reveals that the majority of the respondents (82.73%) are very much satisfied with the information which are provided by the rural / public libraries available in their locality; and a substantial number of respondents (64.74 %) do not face any difficulties to access right information whereas very few respondents (32.25 %) are getting problems to access right information. The study has clearly indicated that, regarding the improvement of information services in rural environment it is necessary to make rural public library in every rural villages and make the rural people aware about the need and importance of the rural public library. Now a day's libraries play an important role in teaching-learning, making people informed citizens and make people aware about the various developmental schemes being run by the States and Central Governments. The library gives more information to rural community and help in development of rural areas. So, the Assam Government should take steps for the proper growth and development of Rural Public Libraries located in under developed areas of Barak Valley, South Assam in particular and rest of Assam in general for the overall development of the state. It would not be out of place to mention that, library legislation has not been enacted in Assam. Therefore an effort should be taken from the Government of Assam for the overall development of public libraries in Assam state especially in underdeveloped areas for creating more jobs and extending more library services to the society.

A similar study was carried out by Olarongbe et al. (2013) on the information needs and characteristics of users of Oyo State Public Library, Nigeria. The findings showed that the majority of library users were students and they needed information that supports their education, which were sought mainly from their personal textbooks. The majority of the users obtained their needed information from library and the internet. The major constraint to accessing needed information was inadequacy of relevant materials, Periodic users' studies and acquisition of current and relevant materials were suggested as possible solutions.

A study was conducted by Kaur and Lal (2016) on information seeking behaviour of different types of users of public libraries of Southern Punjab. Findings of the study revealed that the information needs relating to respondents academic programmes 41%, general information 25.8% and politics 6.2%, agriculture and security 4.6%, sports 2.6%, health 1.7% and personal development 1.7% each. This further indicates that the students who were the majority of the library users needed information to support their academic programmes and to pass their various examinations. Findings also showed that for respondents to fulfil their varying information needs, 71% representing the respondents visit the library every day. This could be due to the fact that most of them were students and retired persons. 16.9% visit the library once in two days, 10.7% visit the library about three times in a week and 8.9% visit the library occasionally. The analysis revealed that most respondents visited the library to obtain materials for private studies, study using own materials, studying in peaceful environment, reading

newspaper, for other purpose, reading for relaxation and general knowledge acquisition. This also indicated that most users while they visited the library. In this regard, the library provided a conducive environment for reading and studying more than providing for needed materials (information). This explains why majority of the respondents see library as reading centre. The various kinds of resources sought by the respondents were presented in library. Findings of the study further indicates that the most consulted resources in the library were Newspapers/magazines, Novels, reference materials, textbooks, several other kinds of resources, Government publication and Government reports consulted materials in the library. This further showed that other categories of users were very few in the library such as visually impaired, deaf, handicapped, specialists, farmers, neo-literates, etc. who would have preferred other library resources. Findings further revealed that textbooks 22.32% were the prominent resources used by the majority of the respondents because of the relevancy to the respondent's information needs. 21.4% were newspaper/magazine, 15.1% reference materials, 11.6% poems, other general materials were 10%, government publications 8% and government reports were 1.7%. The majority of the respondents who indicated textbooks could be as a result of students dominating in the library users following general awareness. Findings indicates that the major constraints that hindered meeting users information needs include lack of information retrieval tools in the library, inadequate relevant materials, the former response may be connected with lack of knowledge of available retrieval tools in the library by respondents whereas the latter response against the backdrop of the general state of neglect of public libraries. Other constraints indicated were: Inadequate time to seek needed information, library proximity problem, ignorance of where to obtain needed materials, hardly conducive state of the library and uncooperative attitude of the library staff. Others specified constraints were: erratic power supply, inadequate toilet facilities and internet facility in the library for the users also. The study further recommends that the state government authorities must ensure that the minimum standard required for public libraries to provide effective and efficient services as recommended by IFLA/UNESCO, is adhered to.

A study was conducted by Job and Nwokedi (2020) on information needs and seeking behaviour of teenagers in Plateau State Library Board, Jos. The findings of the study revealed among others that: Most, Eighty- three (83) of the respondents strongly agreed that they need information on academics with 57.2 %.; Majority, Ninety- five (95) of the respondents strongly agreed that they seek information on education, for assignment and examination with percentage of 65.6%.; Most, Ninety eight (98) of the respondents indicated that cyber café with the internet was readily available in the library with (68%).

Another study was conducted by Okonobo, Njideka and Mazah (2015) on comparative study of information seeking behaviour of researchers in Nigeria Libraries: Librarians Perceptive. The study investigates researcher's information seeking behaviour in Nigeria libraries. Findings of the study revealed that researchers in Nigeria libraries seeking for academic/ research information, current awareness information, business information, industrials attachment/employment, sports/ entertainment and personal health information among other. It also noted that textbooks are the major information materials consulted by the researchers in the libraries. The results provide an insight into the challenges associated with information seeking behaviour of researchers in Nigeria libraries such as network fluctuate,

inadequate knowledge of use of catalogue, insufficient librarian, incompleteness of records, lack of time to access information resources, nonchalant attitude of library staff and information scattered in too many sources among other.

Similarly, Ching, Fidella, Ngadan, and Ho (2020) conducted an investigation on information needs and information seeking behaviour of the rural dwellers in Sarawak focusing on identifying their information needs; examining their use of information sources; assessing their perception of quality and accessibility of the information sources; and determining the barriers to information seeking. Findings of the study revealed that the rural dwellers have the highest needs in the area of religion, health and medical, as well as entertainment, leisure, and sports. They have the lowest needs for information about social welfare, politics, and general/state election. The popularity of digital sources such as the internet, social media, and mobile applications have become the main source of information seeking of the rural dwellers, with the traditional sources such as television, radio, and newspapers are still being widely used. When the perception of information source quality and accessibility is high, the frequency of using the source for information seeking is also high. Poor infrastructure and limited financial ability are cited as the main barriers to information seeking among the rural dwellers.

A study was also carried out by Otoide (2015) on information needs of secondary school students from selected schools in Abraka. The results from the study as revealed confirm that information is a valuable resource in the life of every individual even secondary school students whether they live in urban or rural communities. The secondary school students in Abraka need information for their academic pursuit, health care, entertainment, friendship, religion, family care etc. findings of the study further revealed that students need this information for learning, knowledge acquisition, recreation, entertainment, up-to-date information personal development, academic success and research. However, inadequate information resources, poor library skills, poor information literacy skills, lack of awareness of information needs and unfamiliarity with the school library are some problems they encounter while trying to meet these information needs.

3.1

RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted survey research design. The study was carried out in Benue State. Benue State is located in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria with twenty three local government areas and is been divided into three senatorial zones: Zone A, B and C. The population of the study comprised of Four Hundred and Ninety (490) children were registered in the Children section of the Benue State Library Board Headquarters, Makurdi. According to the librarian in charge of the children section 490 children were registered (Source: Registration Record of the Children Librarian Benue State Library Board Headquarters, Makurdi). A sample size of two hundred and twenty (220) children was used for the study. This sample size of the children was determined using Taro Yamane formula (1969). At the last stage, the children were selected using simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is a self-developed questionnaire titled "Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Children in Public Libraries Questionnaire" (INSBCPLQ). The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation

by experts in the field of librarianship. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents at Benue State Library Board Head Quarters, Makurdi by the researcher. Copies of the questionnaire were all administered and retrieved immediately after completion. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of Frequency Count and Mean scores to answer the research questions. The instrument which take the form of a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), were all scored thus; SA=4, A=3, D=2 and SD=1. The Mean benchmark is calculated thus; $4+3+2+1/4= 2.50$. Therefore any item with a Mean value of 2.50 and above will be considered ‘‘Agreed’’ or ‘‘Accepted’’ while those below 2.50 will be considered ‘‘Disagreed’’ or ‘‘Rejected’’.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section deals with the presentation and analysis of data obtained from responses. Therefore, the data analysis was based on the total number of questionnaire returned. As earlier noted sample population for the study were 220. Accordingly, 220 questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and 220 returned. Hence, the percentage returned is 100% indicating reasonable high percentage.

4.1 Results

The result of the study was organized around the research questions as follows:

4.1.1. Research Question 1: What are the children’s information needs in public libraries in Benue state?

Table 1: Mean scores of the children’s information needs in public libraries in Benue state.

S/N	Item Statement	Responses				Mean (X)	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	Children need information on child development and skills acquisition	68	114	33	5	3.11	Agreed
2	Some children need information on culture of the people	100	66	34	20	3.12	Agreed
3	Children need information for reading and Quiz competition	120	20	62	18	3.10	Agreed
4	Some children need information on current affairs	80	86	29	25	3.00	Agreed
5	Children need information on Parental guidance	77	46	63	34	2.75	Agreed
6	Some children need physical health and safety information	54	99	27	40	2.76	Agreed
7	Children need childhood/ adolescent information	84	22	72	42	2.66	Agreed
8	Children need social welfare information like home grown feeding programme	66	22	109	23	2.59	Agreed
9	Some children need future career information	88	33	42	57	2.69	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 above showed the mean responses to children’s information needs in public libraries in Benue state. From the table above, children indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 were the information they need in public libraries in Benue state with mean scores above the bench mark of 2.50. In essence all the items were clearly agreed by the respondents.

4.1.2 Research Question 2: What are the ways in which children seek information in public libraries in Benue state?

Table 2: Mean scores of ways in which children seek information in public libraries in Benue state.

S/N	Item Statement	Responses				Mean (X)	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	Consulting the children librarian	160	20	26	14	3.48	Agreed
2	Personal interaction with public library staff.	96	89	18	17	3.20	Agreed
3	One of the ways in which children seek information is by asking questions.	96	62	21	41	2.97	Agreed
4	Browsing the book shelves	89	78	9	44	2.96	Agreed
5	Reporting to staff	111	32	15	62	2.87	Agreed
6	Children go through picture books to seek information.	36	44	114	26	2.41	Disagreed
7	Children seek information by complaining with peer group.	97	60	11	52	2.92	Agreed
8	One of the ways in which children seek information is through story telling.	80	86	29	25	3.00	Agreed
9	Through children literacy programme	88	33	42	57	2.69	Agreed
10	Through film show services available	10	102	80	28	2.42	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 above indicates the ways in which children seek information in public libraries in Benue state. From the table above, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 were clearly indicated by the respondents as ways in children they seek for information in Public Libraries in Benue state with mean scores above the cut- off marks of 2.50 and above. While the respondents disagreed with items 6 and 10 with mean scores below the cut-off marks.

4.1.3 Research Question 3: What are the sources of information available to children in public libraries in Benue state?

Table 3: Mean scores of the sources of information available to children in public libraries in Benue state.

S/N	Item Statement	Responses				Mean (X)	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
1.	Audio/ talking books.	68	114	33	5	3.00	Agreed
2.	Graphics novels and manga.	97	86	14	23	3.17	Agreed
3.	Story and information books for all ages.	77	100	35	8	3.12	Agreed
4.	Comics and magazines	111	32	15	62	2.87	Agreed
5.	Picture books	70	48	80	22	2.75	Agreed
6.	Encyclopaedias	82	73	11	54	2.83	Agreed
7.	Books for children learning to read.	54	122	20	24	2.94	Agreed
8.	Stories in large printed formats	66	22	109	23	2.59	Agreed
9.	Fiction and creative writing books.	88	33	42	57	2.69	Agreed
10.	Board books for babies and toddlers.	100	59	50	11	3.13	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Result from table 3 above showed the sources of information available to children in public libraries in Benue state. From the table above, all the items were agreed by the respondents as sources of information available to children in public libraries in Benue state with mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50.

4.1.4 Research Question 4: What are the information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state?

Table 4: Mean scores of the information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state.

S/N	Item Statement	Responses				Mean (X)	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	One of the information children often sourced in public libraries is picture books.	106	40	30	44	2.95	Agreed
2	Children sourced board books for babies and toddlers in public libraries.	130	14	26	50	3.02	Agreed
3	I often sourced for talking books in public libraries.	23	124	33	40	2.59	Agreed
4	Books for children learning to read is one among the information sourced by children.	46	100	10	64	2.58	Agreed
5	Children sourced for stories and information books for all ages in public libraries.	98	49	42	30	2.97	Agreed
6	Children sourced for books to help with homework in public libraries.	144	9	44	23	3.25	Agreed

7	Audio books on CD is one of the information sourced by students in public libraries.	100	59	50	11	3.13	Agreed
8	Children sourced for stories in large print formats in public libraries.	117	12	43	48	2.90	Agreed
9	One of the information often sourced by children in public libraries is comics and magazines.	98	49	42	30	2.97	Agreed
10	Current affairs books is another information often sourced by children in public libraries.	86	68	26	40	2.91	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Result from table 4 above shows the mean scores of the responses to the information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state. From the above table, it is clearly indicated that all the respondents agreed to the entire items as being the information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state. This is because, the mean scores of all items are above the benchmark of 2.50. Hence the respondents accepted the whole items as the information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state.

4.1.5 Research Question 5: What are the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue state?

Table 5: Mean scores of the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue state

S/N	Item Statement	Responses				Mean (X)	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	One of the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing public library is lack of awareness/ orientation programme	36	116	44	24	2.75	Agreed
2	Inadequate search skills hinders children from accessing and utilizing public library resources	88	54	36	42	2.85	Agreed
3	Lack of assistance from the library staff hinders children from accessing and utilizing the resources of public library	36	44	144	26	2.41	Disagreed
4	One of the challenge hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources is lack of information literacy programme	57	104	32	27	2.87	Agreed
5	One of the challenge hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources is lack of current materials	116	66	20	18	3.29	Agreed
6	Unstable power supply hinders children from accessing and utilizing public library	144	9	44	23	3.25	Agreed
7	One of the challenge hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources is because public library environment is not conducive for reading/ studying.	36	48	33	103	2.08	Disagreed
8	One of the challenge hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources is lack of consistencies in usage of the library.	89	66	36	29	2.98	Agreed
9	Another challenge is lack of knowledge of available sources.	76	108	29	7	3.15	Agreed

10	Inability to evaluate sources of information is one of the challenge hindering children from accessing and utilizing resources in public library.	88	67	58	7	3.07	Agreed
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Source: Field Survey, 2021

Result from table 5 above shows the mean scores of the responses to the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue state. From the above table, it is clearly indicated that the respondents agreed with items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 as being the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue state. This is because, the mean scores of the items were above the benchmark of 2.50. While items 3 and 7 with mean scores of 2.41 and 2.08 below the cut-off mark of 2.50 and above were disagreed. Hence children disagreed with item 7 and item 10 as not being the challenges hindering them from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue state.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings derived from the results of the study, the following were discussed.

Findings of the study as shown on table 1 revealed that children’s information needs are on child development and skills acquisition, some children need information on culture of the people, information for reading and quiz competition, children need information on parental guidance, physical and safety information, information on childhood and adolescent, children need social welfare information like home grown feeding programme, as well as future career information. Findings of the study is in agreement with that of Otoide (2015) who reported that secondary school students in Abraka need information for their academic pursuit, health care, entertainment, friendship, religion, family care etc. the author further reported that students need this information for learning, knowledge acquisition, recreation, entertainment, up-to-date information, personal development, academic success and research. The findings of the study is also in line with Job and Nwokedi (2020) who found that teenagers need information on academics and career information with 57.2 %.; Majority, Ninety- five (95) of the respondents strongly agreed that they need information on education, for assignment and examination with percentage of 65.6%.

Findings of the study on table 2 revealed the ways in which children seek information in public libraries in Benue state to include: consulting the children librarian, personal interaction with public library staff, children seek information by asking questions, browsing the book shelves, reporting to staff, complaining, with peer group, children seek information through story telling as well as children literacy programme. Findings of the study is in corroborates with that of Olarongbe et al (2013) who revealed that public library users ways of seeking information is through personal interaction with library staff, asking questions in various library sections, browsing through the book shelves and information literacy programmes in public library. Findings is also in consonance with Job and Nwokedi (2020) who maintained that teenagers in Plateau State Library Board Seek information through their peer group, browsing the children library shelves, asking questions and story-telling.

Findings of the study on table 3 revealed the sources of information available to children in Public libraries in Benue state to include; audio/ talking books, graphic novels and manga, story and information books for all ages, comics and magazines, picture books, encyclopaedias, books for children learning to read, stories in large printed formats, fiction and creative writing books, board books for babies and toddlers. Findings of the study corroborates with Okonobo, Njideka and Mazah (2015) whose study reported that textbooks are the major information materials available and consulted by the researchers in the libraries. Furthermore, findings of the study is also in consonance with Abdullahi, Igbinovia and Solanke (2015) whose study showed that the information resources available to the respondents include books, periodicals (e.g. journals, magazine and newspaper etc.) and internet services provided at the e-library. The authors also reported that the information sources available to users are formal and informal which includes print, electronic, multimedia and audio-visual.

Findings of the study on table 4 revealed that the information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state are: picture books, board books for babies and toddlers, talking books, books for children learning to read, stories and information books for all ages, books to help with homework, audio books on CD, stories in large printed formats, comics and magazines as well as current affairs books. Findings of the study is in line with that of Kaur and Lal (2016) who indicates that the most consulted resources in the library were Newspapers/magazines, Novels, reference materials, textbooks, several other kinds of resources, Government publication and Government reports consulted materials in the library. The authors further reported that textbooks 22.32% were the prominent resources used by the majority of the respondents because of the relevancy to the respondent's information needs. 21.4% were newspaper/magazine, 15.1% reference materials, 11.6% poems, other general materials were 10%, government publications 8% and government reports were 1.7%.

Findings of the study on table 5 revealed that lack of awareness/ orientation programme, inadequate search skills, lack of information literacy programme, lack of current materials, unstable power supply, lack of consistencies in usage of the library, lack of knowledge of available sources as well as inability to evaluate sources of information are the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue state. Findings of the study is in agreement with that of Kaur and Lal (2016) who reported the major constraints that hindered meeting users information needs in public libraries include inadequate relevant materials, lack of knowledge, inadequate time to seek needed information, library proximity problem, ignorance of where to obtain needed materials, and erratic power supply. Findings of the study is also in consonant with that of Abdullahi, Igbinovia and Solanke (2015) whose study reported factors affecting respondent's usage of information ranges from inadequacy of relevant library equipment, inadequate relevant library materials, and lack of time.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that children needs information on child development and skills acquisition, some children need information on culture of the

people, information for reading and quiz competition, children need information on parental guidance, physical and safety information, information on childhood and adolescent, children need social welfare information like home grown feeding programme, as well as future career information. Also, the ways in which children seek information in public libraries are consulting the children librarian, personal interaction with public library staff, children seek information by asking questions, browsing the book shelves, reporting to staff, complaining, with peer group, children seek information through story telling as well as children literacy programme. Furthermore, the sources of information available to children in Public libraries in Benue state to include; audio/ talking books, graphic novels and manga, story and information books for all ages, comics and magazines, picture books, encyclopaedias, books for children learning to read, stories in large printed formats, fiction and creative writing books, board books for babies and toddlers. Also, the information children often sourced in public libraries in Benue state are: picture books, board books for babies and toddlers, talking books, books for children learning to read, stories and information books for all ages, books to help with homework, audio books on CD, stories in large printed formats, comics and magazines as well as current affairs books. Finally, lack of awareness/ orientation programme, inadequate search skills, lack of information literacy programme, lack of current materials, unstable power supply, lack of consistencies in usage of the library, lack of knowledge of available sources as well as inability to evaluate sources of information are the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue state.

5.2 Recommendations

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

- i. The management of Benue state library board should organise awareness/ orientation programme for the children to enable them have knowledge of available sources in the children's section of the library. This will enable the children to be aware of the resources of the public library in order to access and utilize them to meet their information needs.
- ii. The librarians in charge of the children's section of the library should guide and assist the children by educating them on basic search skills. This will enable the children to develop adequate search skills for effective searching and retrieval of children literature.
- iii. The Benue state library Board Headquarters, Makurdi should embark on information literacy programme targeted at children. This can help the children to be aware of the resources and services of the public library and be able to access and utilize them effectively.
- iv. The management of Benue state library board should weed materials that are old and outdated in order to create space to accommodate current materials that can be helpful to the children. This will encourage the children in accessing and utilizing the public library resources.

- v. The Director of Benue state library should provide an alternative means of power supply to the children section by procuring a standby generator for the children's section in case of power failure.
- vi. Parents/ guardians should encourage their children to use the public library constantly. This will enhance the children to be more consistent in usage of the resources available in the children's section of the public library.

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