December 2021

INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE UNDERGRADUATES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

Lawrence Arumuru
arus.lawrence@gmail.com

INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE UNDERGRADUATES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

ARUMURU, Lawrence
Lecturer, Department of Library and Information Science
Faculty of Education,
Delta State University, Abraka
E-mail: arus.lawrence@gmail.com
Phone: +2348073119130
          +2347039132918

Abstract

This study was hinged on the information needs and seeking behaviour of library and information science undergraduates during the covid-19 pandemic in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Three questions were raised to put the study in the right perspective. The researcher employed the simple random type of sampling technique used to sample 184 respondents who are 200, 300, and 400 level undergraduates from Library and Information Science schools in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The questionnaire was used as the sole instrument for data collection. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (simple percentage and frequency counts). The finding from the study showed that the information required by undergraduates of library and information science includes: information for personal development, covid-19 preventive protocol, resumption of schools, health-related issues, socio-security, etc. The approach of undergraduates in LIS when seeking information includes: seeking information from course-mates online, consultation of designated chat groups, consulting lecturers, e-books, e-journals, and use of professional services. Also, it was shown that they consult various sources when seeking information, such as e-books, e-journals, websites, social networking sites, e-magazines, print materials, search engines, mass media, etc. The researcher, therefore, recommended among other things that covid-19 has helped to expose undergraduates to different approaches of seeking information and to be independent learners, hence, government at all levels, university administrators, and lecturers should inculcate ICTs into the curriculum of higher institutions of learning alongside the traditional system of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Library and Information Science, undergraduates, information needs, information-seeking behavior, covid-19 pandemic, Niger Delta Region.

Introduction

Information is a key factor for the success of every human activity/endeavor because every human being needs information to succeed and the amount of information at the disposal of an individual if maximally utilized will determine the level of success achieved. The nature/category of information required by an individual or group of individuals varies from profession to profession, environment, political/socio-economic situation, etc. (Wilson, 2000; Nwagwu & Oshiname, 2009). Information in the view of KOC University Library Glossary (2014) is processed data that is presented in a form that is comprehensible and from which meaning can be derived within the context of its use.

As an undergraduate in a higher institution of learning, information is a key factor that determines the nature/height of success that can be achieved. Undergraduates need information on virtually every activity that is carried out in every higher institution of learning such as the university ranging from information on admission/registration, course work, course registration/school fee payment, lecture time, test/examination, vacation/resumption of school, assignment, opening/closing hours of the school library, etc. Buttressing this view, Bruce (2005) observed that information plays a major role in our daily professional and personal lives and we are constantly challenged to take charge of the information that we need for work, fun, and everyday decisions and tasks to achieve our set goals. More so, as undergraduates in higher institutions of learning, for instance, the university, the academic workload is usually tasking which has resulted in the need to have at their beck and call information that is related to their course work, and information related to other academic activities in the university/academic environment.

Undergraduates are anticipated to be fully prepared for the task ahead after graduation in any organization that will enable them to forecast, analyse and speculate possible outcomes over a range of issues related to policies, planning, and decision making. Therefore, they require lots of information while in school to enhance their intellectual capacity thinking to help meet and cope with challenges they are to face in whatever position they may find themselves in after graduation. However, the raving coronavirus pandemic has reshaped the information requirements/needs of every aspect of human endeavor worldwide thereby influencing the way individuals, organizations, government and non-governmental organizations, health institutions, undergraduates, etc. seek information.

Information-seeking behavior is how an individual searches for information or the approach applied by an individual to source/gather/acquire information for the advancement of knowledge or personal gain/development. (Baro, Onyenania, & Osaheni, 2010; Pettigrew, Fidel & Bruce as cited in Okoh & Ijiekhuamhen, 2014).

Doraswamy (2017, P.) in his study of information behavior gave an elaborate overview of what it entails to include:

i) Information Behaviour: This has to do with the whole of human behavior with sources and channels of information.

ii) Seeking Behaviour: Information-seeking behavior has to do with the intentional seeking of information as a consequence of a need to complete some goal.

iii) Search Behaviour: The micro-level behavior employed by the information searcher in interacting with information systems of all kinds.

iv) Use Behaviour; this is comprised of mental and physical acts involved in incorporating information into the existing knowledge base of a person.

More so, Padmavati (2018) opined that there are two types of information-seeking behavior and they are:

i. Mandatory search for information: this has to do with the position occupied by an individual which compares the individual to seek needed information. For instance, professionals employed in different/diverse fields of studies are compared/forced to access the information in their respective fields of expertise/area of specialty to get the required knowledge to discharge their duties effectively. For example, librarians, doctors, lawyers, journalists, etc.

ii. Optional search for information: this type is different from the mandatory search for information/information-seeking behaviour. This has to do with the probing for information to gain general knowledge and not for work-related activities.

Therefore, the search for information by undergraduates has to do with the channels used for getting needed or the approach or technique employed by an undergraduate to satisfy an information need. Bhatti (2008) opined that undergraduates' information-seeking behavior is prompted by their conscious effort to satisfy their information needs which are related/similar to their academic work and some of such examples are; the need

to write an assignment, prepare for the seminar, engage in group class discussion, write project work, prepare for the workshop, write exams, etc.

Statement of the Problem

It cannot be overemphasized that information is key to the success of undergraduates in their academic pursuit especially in this era of globally ravaging covid-19 pandemic and coupled with the presence of numerous sources of information/access points at the beck and call of information seekers. The researcher's preliminary observation arising from the interaction with undergraduates and careful consultation of relevant literature revealed that the information-seeking behavior of undergraduates has changed from what it used to be in relation with the new normal as they search and access needed information from different perspectives. This new way of searching for information may not be isolated from the huge demand for information for them to survive in an academic environment that places so much demand on the learners. Hence, the researcher is carrying out this study to investigate the information needs and seeking behaviour of library and information science undergraduates during the covid-19 pandemic in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Research Objectives

This study was set off to investigate the information needs and seeking behaviour of library and information science undergraduates during the covid-19 pandemic in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

i.   establish the information-seeking behavior of undergraduates during the covid-19 pandemic;

ii.   determine the information needs of undergraduates during the covid-19 pandemic, and to

iii.   find out the sources of information consulted by undergraduates when seeking information during the covid-19 pandemic.

Review of Related Literature

The review of relevant related literature is centered on the specific objectives of this study by drawing opinions from what has been done by seasoned scholars generally. Undergraduates' information need is a continuous process/exercise daily because the information is a key economic factor required for the desired goal to be achieved. The need for information always prompts undergraduates to exhibit different approaches to meet their information needs. Seeking for information or information-seeking commences when somebody recognizes the fact that the present state of knowledge possessed is less than the needed knowledge to deal with the situation on the ground. In agreetment with the above thought, Pettigrew, Fidel, and Bruce (2001) defined information behaviour as the study of how people need, seek, give and use information in different contexts, including the workplace and everyday living. Wilson (2000) having the same school of thought stated that information seeking is a product or reflection of the multiplicity of issues, for instance, the array of information sources in existence/available, the use of such information, the background, stimulus, professional bearing and personal characteristics of the user.

Thus, the approach applied by undergraduates in trying to have access to needed information depends on the prevailing circumstances in their environment and this comprised of the sources of information at the disposal of the scholar/undergraduate, socio-economic issues. It also depends on the background knowledge/information literacy skills of the undergraduate, the type of information needed, the urgency in getting the desired information, the availability/competency of information providers (libraries and

other information centres), the available financial resources at the disposal of the undergraduate, etc. (Chen as cited in (Oyadeyi, 2014).

This suggests that the character exhibited by undergraduates when searching for information depends on their level of education, knowledge on the available medium of getting information, access to library and other sources of information, information search skills possessed, the level of determination by the undergraduate, search strategy adopted, etc.

Undergraduates' ability to access to needed information is key to the success achieved in their academic pursuits. The information needs of undergraduates are a purposeful desire to have access to information/recorded knowledge to fill a knowledge gap directed towards the attainment of educational/personal goal(s). The information needs of undergraduates are dynamic because it is not an end itself but a means to an end, which implies that the information needs of undergraduates are determined by the task ahead to be fulfilled, the prevailing socio-economic circumstance, etc. The dynamism of information needs was also emphasized by Uwa and Ossai-onah (2013) who averred that information needs vary in line with the field of study (social, economy, politics, culture, education, etc.) and the task before the person who desires it. As pointed out by Kadir, Johari, and Hussin (2018), undergraduates' information needs include information on personal health, academic/research, current affairs, business, industrial attachment/employment, sports/entertainment, further studies, security, environment, etc.

For undergraduates to satisfy their information needs through the exhibition of certain behaviuor, they consult various sources of information that are available in print,

non-print format, course mates, lecturers, librarians, etc. In a scholarly work that was done/executed by Bronstein (2010), the information sources consulted by undergraduates when seeking information can be categorized into major areas, which are: networked sources (social media, academic databases, internet/websites, search engines, etc.), human sources (lecturers, course mates, friends, family members, etc.), printed sources (textbooks, newspapers, magazines, reference materials, etc.) and expert sources (professional).

Emmanuel and Jegede (2011) observed that available literature on information-seeking behaviour that focused on graduate students of universities in line with the school of thought from various studies show that the internet, libraries, and online resources play a substantial role in undergraduates' search for information. They further emphasized findings from related studies revealed that access to libraries often results in a lengthy stay in search of information materials. In the meantime, previous studies that were conducted on graduates and undergraduates from higher institutions of learning like the university on how the internet affects their scholarly work and the significance it might have on-campus libraries (Friedland, 2002).

Methodology

This study is descriptive, hence, the researcher adopted the descriptive survey research design because the researcher aims to collect data on the already existing variables and interpret the collected data without any manipulation or interference.

The study was carried out with the aid of a self-structured questionnaire that was administered to 184 respondents (200, 300, and 400 level undergraduates) in Library and Information Science schools in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The LIS schools include

Delta State University, Abraka, University of Benin, Benin City, Ambros Ali University,

Ekpoma, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Abia State University.

Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Information Seeking Behavior of Undergraduates during Covid-19 Pandemic

Information Seeking Behaviour	SA		A		D		SD	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The internet is my first port of call when I am seeking information	137	79	33	19	3	2	00	00
I often times contact my course mate(s) when I am seeking information	37	21	114	66	19	11	3	2
I seek for information from designated chat group(s)	40	24	97	54	30	17	3	2
E-books are often consulted by me when I am seeking information	41	24	81	47	45	26	6	4
I seek for information through the use of e-journals	20	12	75	43	61	35	17	10
My lecturers are my best bet when I am seeking information	11	6	74	43	70	41	18	10
I consult my friends/family members when I am seeking information	48	28	79	46	43	25	3	2
I seek for information from my university's e-library	26	15	71	41	56	32	20	12
I employ the services of a professional when I am seeking information	36	21	78	46	48	28	8	5
I seek for information from mass media	48	28	99	58	18	11	5	3
I frequently use search engines when I am seeking information	80	46	70	41	12	7	11	6

It was revealed in Table 1 that the majority of the respondents (78%) strongly agreed that the internet is their first choice when in need of information. While others agreed that they seek information from their course mates (66%), designated chat groups (54%), e-books (47%), e-journals (43%), lecturers (43%), friends/family (46%), university's e-library (41%), use of professional services (46%), mass media (58%) and search engines (41%). The findings revealed in Table 1 buttressed the opinion of Chan (as

cited in Oyadeyi, 2014) that several factors determine the approach applied by undergraduates when seeking information and the covid-19 pandemic is one of such factors that has influenced the information-seeking behavior of undergraduates in recent times.
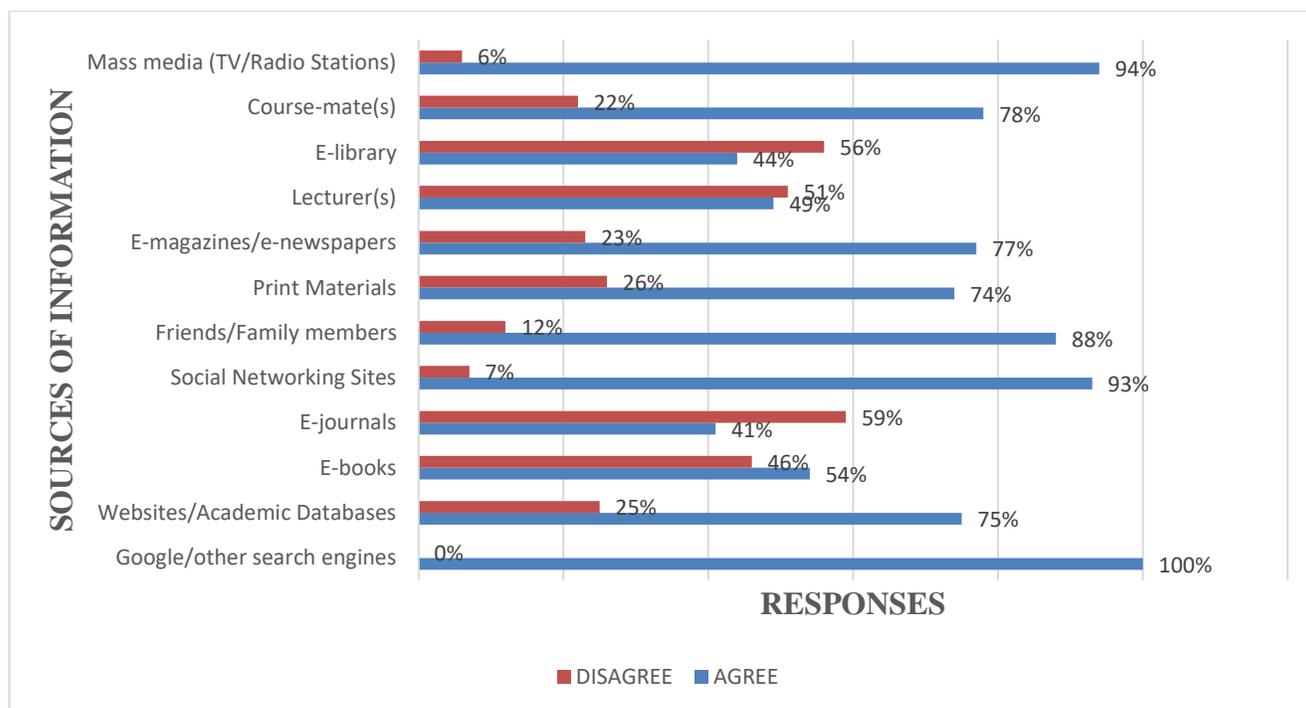
Figure 1: Information Needs of Undergraduates during Covid-19 Pandemic
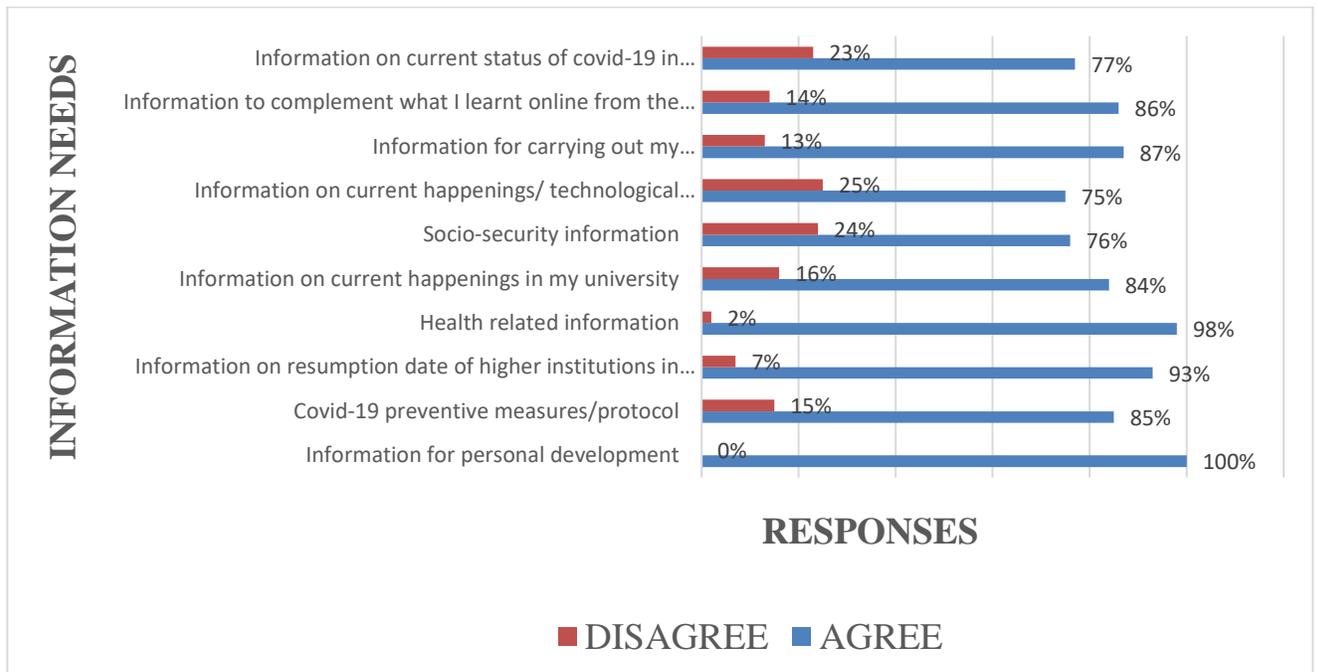
Data in Figure 1 revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated that their information needs during the covid-19 pandemic include information for: personal development (100%), covid-19 preventive protocol (85%), schools' resumption date(s) (93%), health issues (98%), current happenings (84%), socio-security (76%), technological innovation (75%), course work (87%), update of knowledge (86%) and information on the current status of covid-19 in Nigeria/globally (77%). The finding as established in figure 1 revealed that the information needs of students are dynamic and tailored towards the

achievement of their educational goals, personal development, socio-security, economic and general well-being which is in line with the thoughts of the scholar as Uwa and Ossai-onah (2013), Kadir, Johari and Hussin (2018).

Figure 2: Sources of Information Consulted by Undergraduates when Seeking for Information

As revealed in figure 2, various sources of information were consulted by undergraduates during the covid-19 pandemic. These sources of information as agreed by the majority of the respondents are search engines (100%), websites (75%), e-books (54%), social networking sites (93%), friends/family members (88%), print materials (74%), e-magazines (77%), course mates (78%) and mass media (94%). The findings as shown in figure 2 corroborate that of Bronstein (2010) that the sources of information

consulted by undergraduates can be categorized into networked, human, print, and expert sources.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The coronavirus pandemic/covid-19 has changed every aspect/phase of human existence especially the way people interact with one another. Students of higher institutions of learning in Nigeria and beyond have had their fair share of this global change/adjustment, hence, their information needs and approach towards seeking information was also not left out. Students have resulted to seeking information using more computers and other related facilities with less personal contact.

The researcher, therefore, recommends that the covid-19 pandemic has helped to expose students to different approaches of seeking information and to be independent learners, hence, government at all levels, university administrators, and lecturers should inculcate ICTs into the curriculum of higher institutions of learning alongside the traditional system of teaching and learning.

References

Baro, E. E., Onyenania, G. O., & Osaheni, O. (2010). Information-seeking behavior of undergraduate students in the humanities in three universities in Nigeria. *SA Jnl Libs & Info Sci 76*(2), 109-117.

Bhatti, R. (2008). *Information needs of students*. Islamia University Library: Bahawalpur.

Bronstein, J. (2010). Selecting and using information sources: Source preferences and information pathways of Israeli Library and Information Science Students. *Information Research, 15*(4), 1-15. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8c0c/7f576613d9ab36efa4017f1d5ca9c7484291.pdf

Bruce, H. (2005). Personal, anticipated information need. *Information Research, 10*(3).

Emmanuel, O. S., & Jegede, O. R. (2011). Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour and Use of Information Resources by Mba Students at a Nigerian University. *An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia, 5*(4), 250-264.

Friedlander, A. (2002). Dimensions and use of Scholarly Information Environment. Introduction to a data set assembled by the Digital Library Federation and Outsell Inc. http://www.Clir.org/pubs/reports/pub 110/contents.html

Kadir, M. R. A., Johari, N. I. S., Hussin, N. (2018). Information needs and information-seeking behavior: A case study of students in private university libraries. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education & Development, 7*(3), 226-235. https://hrmars.com/hrmars_papers/Information_Needs_and_Information_Seeking_Behaviour_A_Case_Study_on_Students_in_Private_University_Library.pdf

KOC University Library Glossary (2014), Definition of Information: http://staging.brewww.com/skl/en/node/66

Nwagwu, W.E. & Oshiname, R. (2009). Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Nurses at the University College Hospital, Ibadan, Nigeria. *African Journal of Library, Archival and Information Science, 19*, 125-38

Okoh, M. I., & Ijiekhuamhen, O. P. (2014). Information Seeking Behaviour of Undergraduates in a Nigerian university. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management, 5*(2), 69-83.

Oyadeli, A. E. (2014). The information needs and information-seeking behaviour among the students of Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Okitipupa,

International Journal of Digital Library Services, 4(1), 65-82. http://www.ijodls.in/uploads/3/6/0/3/3603729/kunle_emma_65-82.pdf

Padmavati, S. T. (2018). Information seeking behavior: An overview. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330521546_INFORMATION_SEEKING_BEHAVIOR_AN_OVERVIEW

Pettigrew, K.E, Fidel, R., & Bruce, H. (2001). Conceptual Frameworks in Information Behaviour. *Annual Review of Information Science & Technology, 35*(1), 43-78.

Uwa, E. O., & Ossai-onah, O. V. (2013). Information needs and seeking behaviour of students in two universities in Imo state, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2348&context=libphilprac

Wilson, T.D. (2000). *Human information behavior*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270960171_Human_Information_Behavior

Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis*. 2nd Edition, New York: Harper and Row.