2022

INFORMATION ACCESS TOOLS AND UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES BY MEDICAL STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSTIES SOUTH – SOUTH, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of information access tools on the utilization of information resources by medical students in Federal Universities in South – South zone, Nigeria. To achieve this objective, one research question was raised and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Empirical and theoretical literatures were reviewed according to the variables of the study. The study adopted a survey research design with a stratified and purposive sampling technique used to select a total of four hundred and fifty six (456) medical students in the study area. A structured questionnaire was used to get information from the respondents. Simple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The result showed that there is a significant influence of information access tools on utilization of information resources by medical students. Based on the findings, it was recommended that library management and staff should design and make available the information access tools to ensure easy access to information resources and utilization of information.

Keywords: Information access tools; Utilization; Information resources; Medical students; University libraries

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1. INTRODUCTION

Medical libraries in universities are special libraries which main function is to provide access to relevant and up - to - date information resources and thus enhancing research, teaching and learning processes respectively. Medical students require quality information resources in order to use and effectively undertake research and use the acquired knowledge to practice in their profession and become seasoned professionals. Hence, medical libraries are the libraries designed to acquire, process and provide recorded knowledge both in print and non print formats   (published and unpublished) to medical students to aid them in their academic pursuit. Medical library as an academic library plays an indispensable role in the dissemination of information and knowledge. The explosion of information sources in new information format and media requires basic tools to facilitate access to them. To access information, information users have different tools at their disposal. In the traditional library system and in the modern digital information environment, concentration is on using the best access tools. Owing to this reason, several search and information access tools are designed and provided for use. Access tools are seen as information location aids that are used in identifying what a library has in stock for use according to Udofot and Nwachukwu (2019). Ezekwe and Muokebe (2012) also affirmed that these aids create awareness of the total collection of resources in the information system and serve as a key to the store of knowledge.   Information access or searching tools are system created to enhance access to/or retrieval of information. These tools are essential building blocks for libraries, archives, and museums who organize recorded information.

Access tools used in the libraries include the following: catalogue, abstracts, bibliographies, indexes, finding list and registers. Library catalogue which is the most commonly used access tool is a systematic list of a library's collection which indicates

the logical position of the materials so listed in the library according to Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) in Udofot and Nwachukwu (2019). Bibliographies are also used in libraries as access tools: these are lists of books or a critical and historical study of printed books. Abstract is also an access tool and according to Ezekwe and Muokebe (2012) in Udofot and Nwachukwu (2019), abstracts are referred to as summary of publication, article or any other literary composition accompanied by bibliographical details for identification of original document . A systematic guide to the location of words, concepts or other items in books, periodicals or other publication is the index. In electronic environment of today, access tools include; Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), Compact Disk – Read Only Memory (CD-ROMs), online databases, internet, search engines, subject directories and web directories. Afebende and Nna-Etuk (2019) stated that the information environment today requires basic knowledge and understanding of retrieval tools to facilitate access to information. Therefore, Information access tools are very vital and critical for accessibility and for utilization of information resources by users.

Library resources contain information in print and non- print formats such as textbooks, journals, indexes, magazines, reports, internet, videotapes, diskette and microforms. Library resources should be accessible to the students and other users at the right time in their appropriate formats. Accessibility of library resources facilitates easy utilization of library resources. It is assumed that, if information is accessible to the students and users, it will lead to effective learning and research upon utilization.

Information resources utilization can be defined as the practical and maximum use of library resources identified, located and accessed by a user for the purpose of solving a problem or achieving a set goal. To achieve this, also requires gaining mystery over the library resources and the tools that serves as the main access point to the resources. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the influence of information

access tools on medical students' utilization of information resources in federal university in South – South zone, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Information access tools provide a means to get information that exist already in different forms and formats and also provide easy accessibility to information that the users or medical students may not know about. Librarians tried to organized information resources in the library by creating various access points and accessibility tools for effective utilization. Despite all the effort, there is still underutilization of information resources which can be attributed to lack of skills in using the available access tools and also lack of knowledge of the access tools. This study is therefore undertaken to investigate the influence of information access tools on the utilization of information resources by medical students in Federal universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how information access tools influence utilization of information resources by medical students in federal universities in South-South zone of Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

To what extent do information access tools influence medical students' utilization of library resources in federal universities in South-South zone of Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance

H_O1 There is no significant influence of information access tools on medical students' utilization of library resources in federal universities in South-South zone of Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information access tools are those utilities that enable the user to find information from a variety of sources. Information may appear as data in books, computer, file and in people. The sources are considered simply as raw information until they are accessed and used to resolve uncertainty for information. Uhegbu (2007) observed that availability of information resources are meaningless if those who want to make use of them cannot have access to them.

Aniah and Moses (2011) conducted a study titled " undergraduate student access and effective use of library books and other resources: A case study of Chief ASON Bur learning resources centre, University of Mkar, Mkar, Benue State". Five objectives were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study comprised of six hundred (600) undergraduate students from ten (10) departments. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. Descriptive statistics namely frequency count and percentages were used for data analysis. The study revealed that majority of the students lacked skills in the use of library resources.

Atanda and Ugwulebo (2017) also carried out a study on ''Awareness, access and utilization of library catalogue by undergraduate students of the College of Law, Osun State University Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria''. Three objectives and three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The survey research design was

used in the study. The population of the study comprised of forty - five undergraduate students of the College of Law. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Simple percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the data. The study revealed that, 40% of the respondents were aware of user education programme and 4.0% of the respondents were aware of information brochure. Similarly, 47.0% of the respondents were able to access the library catalogue through the use of author access point, and 44.4% of the respondents agreed that both awareness and access brings speed access to information. The study concluded that access points contribute immensely to the utilization of library resources.

Ajiboye, Oyedipe and Alawiye (2013) conducted a study on use of Information Retrieval Tools (IRTs) by the Postgraduate Students of Selected Universities in South - Western Nigeria. Seven objectives and seven research questions were used for the study. The study used descriptive survey method. The study examined the use of Information Retrieval Tools (IRTs) by the post graduate students of selected universities in south - western Nigeria. The study made use of descriptive survey and was carried out over a period of four months between January and May, 2012. The sample size comprised of two thousand and one hundred (2,100) postgraduate students who were randomly selected from different faculties and served with copies of questionnaire. A total of one thousand nine hundred and twenty - three (1,923) copies of useable questionnaire were retrieved which represents 91.6% response rate. The responses were collated and analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. The study showed that respondents make use of IRTs for various purposes and that their university library's user education and information literacy programme forms the main source of their knowledge of Information Retrieval Tools'(IRTs) usage. The findings showed that the main IRTs made use of by the respondents was the Internet

Search Engines and these findings also revealed that the use of the tools aid greatly in information access.

Shuib, Abdullah and Ismail (2010) work titled "The Use of Information Retrieval Tools: a Study of Computer Science Postgraduate Students". The study investigated several information retrieval tools such as Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), Internet search engine; online databases and digital libraries. Three objectives were formulated. Survey design was used for the study and questionnaire was used to elicit data from one hundred and twenty - nine (129) Postgraduate students of Faculty of Science, Computer and Information Technology, University of Malaya who formed the population. They were chosen because of their level of education and their proficiency in using IT infrastructure. The quantitative data were analyzed using statistical program SPSS. The result showed that postgraduate students had difficulties in finding information that were suitable to their learning due to inability to use available information retrieval tools.

Another related study was conducted by Echem and Udo (2018) on Information Retrieval Tools and Library Physical Environment as Correlates of Library Utilization by Students in Rivers State University Library Nigeria. Three research questions were posed and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of six hundred and eighty – two (682) registered undergraduate library users out of which a sample of two hundred and twenty – seven (227) was drawn using Taro Yamane's statistical formula. The instrument used for data collection was researcher-made rating scale. The data collected were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The study revealed that there was a very strong and positive relationship between information retrieval tools available and students' use of the library. It further asserted that there is need for

students to be sensitized on how to use the library through adequate orientation on information retrieval tools.

Information accessibility can be seen as one of the pre-requisites of information resources use. It is worthy of note that the more accessible information resources are, the more likely they are to be used and students tend to use information sources that require the least effort to access. With particular reference to libraries, provision of access to adequate library resources will attract the students, staff and other potential users of the libraries. Therefore, for effective utilization of information by medical students, information access tools are essential.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study adopted Survey research design. The research design was found appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to make inference about the population of the study by studying the sample. The study is thus determining how information access tools that are independent variable influence utilization of information resources by medical students as that is the dependent variable

Area of the study

Nigeria comprises of six geopolitical zones namely: North East, North West, North Central, South East, South West and South - South zones. This study was conducted in federal universities in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria and this zone is made up of six (6) states namely; Cross-River, Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Bayelsa, Edo and River State. Specifically, the study covered the federal universities in Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Edo States given the fact that the institutions so mentioned

have medical colleges. The study focused on information access tools and utilization of information resources by medical students in federal universities in south-south Nigeria. The independent variables in this study are information access tools while the dependent variable is utilization of information resources. The information access tools considered in the study were library catalogues, bibliographies, indexes, abstracts and how they influence utilization of information resources by medical students.

Population of the study

The population of this study comprised of medical science students from the four universities under study, from year three to year five in 2017/ 2018 session. The universities are:-University of Port-Harcourt, University of Uyo, University of Calabar and University of Benin. The population of the study is one thousand one hundred and forty – one (1141) and the breakdown is as presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Population distribution of medical students by institutions

S /N	Name of Universities	Population			
		Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
1.	University of Calabar	123	130	76	329
2.	University of Uyo	135	61	42	238
3.	University of Benin	111	98	88	297
4.	University of Port Harcourt	121	74	82	277
	Total				1141

Source: (UNICAL & UNIBEN) Universities Faculty Records, (2018)
(UNIUYO & UNIPORT). www. myschoolgist.com

4.3. Sampling technique

The sampling techniques used for the study were the stratified random and purposive sampling techniques.

3.5   Sample

The sample for this study consists of 40% of the population of each institution under study. Thus, a total of four hundred and fifty six (456) students were purposively selected for the study as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: 40% Sample distribution by universities

S /N	Name of Universities	Population				Sample size of 40% of the population			
		Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
1.	University of Calabar	123	130	76	329	49	52	31	132
2.	University of Uyo	135	61	42	238	54	24	17	95
3.	University of Benin	111	98	88	297	44	39	36	119
4.	University of Port Harcourt	121	74	82	277	48	30	32	110
	Total				1141				456

Source: (UNICAL & UNIBEN) Universities Faculty Records, (2018)
     (UNIUYO & UNIPORT). www. myschoolgist.com

Instrumentation

A self - developed questionnaire titled "Information Literacy Variables and Medical Students Utilization of Library Resources (ILVMSULRQ)" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher after relevant input by expects and other professionals in the area of library and information science. Information gathered from literature and previously conducted studies were utilized to generate appropriate questions required to elicit answers to the research questions and test the hypotheses. The instrument was divided into three (3) sections. Section A was designed to provide demographic information such as gender, year of study and name of institution. Section B contained the questionnaire items generated on independent variable (information access tools) using a four point likert scale of responses namely: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). Section C was made of 20 items designed to provide information on extent of library resources usage (dependent variables) through a response set of High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME), Rarely (R), and Not At All (NAA). .

Procedure for data collection

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents personally by the researcher with the help of four (4) trained research assistants, one from each institution under study the instrument were administered and collected them back that same day or the next day after the respondents input and effort was put to ensure that none of the instrument was abandon, so the copies were successfully administered and collected and used as the sample for the study.

Method of data analysis

There is no significance influence of Information access tools on medical students' utilization of library resources. The independent variable is information access tools, while dependent variable is utilization of information resources by medical students. To test this hypothesis, Simple Regression analysis was used and the result was as presented in Table 4 showed that Adj. R^2= .10 which implies that the variance in the dependent variables (information resources) can only be accounted by 10.0% contribution of the independent variable (information access tools). A cursory look at the analysis of variance (ANOVA) table showed that though the percentage contribution is small, (F=5.70, p<.05). Since p (.017) is less than p(.05), this implies that information access tools have a significant influence on utilization of information resources by medical students. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Utilization of information resources	456	54.8662	5.82017

Table 4: Simple regression analysis of the influence of Information access tools on medical students' utilization of information resources

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	191.100	1	191.100	5.700	.017[b]
Residual	15221.740	454	33.528		
Total	15412.840	455			

R=.111, R^2 = .012, Adj R^2 = .10,Std Error = 5.790

General discussion of variables

The study examined the influence of information access tools and utilization of information resources by medial students in federal universities in south – south zone of Nigeria. The independent variable is information access tools while the dependent variable is utilization of information resources. The result of descriptive statistics of the variables is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Access tools	456	15.1689	2.01205
Utilization of information resources	456	54.8662	5.82017

Discussion of findings

Hypothesis that stated that there is no significant influence of information access tools on information resource utilization among medical students was rejected. This implies that there is a significant influence of information access tools on information resource utilization among medical students. This is due to the fact that when there is accessibility to information in various forms and formats, utilization of resources is ensured. Information access tools enable the user to find information from variety of sources and make use of specific information from those sources. However, where

access tools like the library catalogues, indexes, subject gateways, among others are available and utilized, utilization of the library resources is high and adequate.

The finding of the study was in line with that of Aniah and Moses (2011) that conducted a study titled undergraduate student access and effective use of library books and other resources: A case study of Chief ASON Bur learning resources centre, University of Mkar, Mkar, Benue State. Five objectives guided the study. The population of the study comprised of six hundred (600) undergraduate students from ten (10) departments. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. The study revealed that majority of the students make effective use of the library resources through their knowledge of information access tools.

Similarly, the findings of the present study is also in consonance with the findings of Atanda and Ugwulebo (2017) that carried out a study on Awareness, access and utilization of library catalogue by undergraduate students of the College of Law, Osun State University Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.. The study revealed that, 40% of the respondents were aware of user education programme and 4.0% of the respondents were aware of information brochure. Similarly, 47.0% of the respondents were able to access the library catalogue through the use of author access point, and 44.4% of the respondents agreed that both awareness and access brings speed access to information. The study concluded that awareness programme and access points contribute immensely to the utilization of library resources.

This finding was also in line with the views of Ajiboye, Oyedipe and Alawiye (2013) who conducted a study on use of Information Retrieval Tools (IRTs) by the Postgraduate Students of Selected Universities in South - Western Nigeria. The outcome shows that respondents make use of IRTs for various purposes and that their university library's user education and information literacy programme forms the main source of their knowledge of Information Retrieval Tools'(IRTs) usage. The findings of

the study also revealed that the use of the tools has impacted positively on their social and academic life and also broaden their global knowledge on diverse issues. It agrees that knowledge and skills in information access tools increases utilization of resources in various forms and formats.

From the findings of the present study, it can be deduced that information access tools leads to accessibility of information and this influences utilization of resources. It is worthy of note that information access tools are to be properly designed and provided for use to enhance and increase information resources utilization.

Conclusion

It was concluded that information access tools significantly influence utilization of information resources by medical students in federal universities south – south, Nigeria Therefore, it is of uttermost importance that, information access tools should be readily designed and provided to users to aid information accessibility and retrieval for optimum utilization of information resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Library management and staff should design and make available the information access tools to ensure easy access to information resources and retrieval of information.

2. The library should create more awareness on the availability of information retrieval tools to the users, and encourage them to utilize the tools whenever they search for information resources in the library.

3.   New information access tools like the OPAC needs to be integrated into the services of the library to ensure efficient service delivery.

4.   The library management should ensure regular training of their staff to acquire new skills and also learn how to provide effective services to their clients

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