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# INFORMATION NEEDS AND IMFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, MALETE.Nigeria

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# **INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, MALETE**

**BY**

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In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, is information and knowledge revolution Many electronic resources have been made most available in the libraries. The increase in availability of information on the Internet has improved Information seeking behavior and needs of most postgraduate students around the globe. Types of information, in a large variety of formats and from many different database, are freely accessible at one place. In the present society, the types of information and the media which present them have become manifold and multifarious, offering many postgraduates students ample opportunity to make choice of selection. Regardless of the group in a human society that is discussed, each one bases its actions upon current information and discards the earlier data. Philosophers emphasize the direct, experiential acquisition of knowledge in the material, physical plane of existence as the most proper form of information. So, no one can deny that knowledge and information are vital.

## **Introduction**

From the beginning of postgraduate programmes in kwara State University (KWASU) effort has been put in place in order to help the students in their information seeking behavior and needs in the course of their programme. Information need is often known in librarianship as evolving from a vague awareness of something missing and as culminating in locating information that contributes to understanding and meaning (Kuhlthau, 1993). Information need is described as a state of knowledge (Belkin et al, 1982) or a gap in individual's knowledge in sense-making situations (Drevin & Nilan 1986). Wilson points out that there must be an attendant motive when a person experiences an information need (Wilson 1997). Line (1974) defined that information need is what an individual ought to have for his work, his edification, his creation etc. while, (Wilson 1997). According to Wilson, a general model of information behavior needs to include at least the following three elements:

- An information need and its drivers, i.e., the factors that give rise to an individual's perception of need;
- The factors that affect the individual's response to the perception of need; and
- The processes or actions involved in that response."

## **Philosophy and Objectives of the Post-Graduate Programmes of Kwara State University**

The philosophy and objectives underlying the introduction of the Post Graduate Programmes at Kwara State University is borne from the mission statement of the University, "to be the fulcrum of a knowledge driven society, building human competences and fostering determination and competition among people through the instrumentality of modern technology". Hence, the

programmes are expected to deepen the zeal and capacity of graduate students in research, teaching and meet administrative needs for national and global development via public and private sector participation. The establishment of these programmes is with the expectation to meet the needs for graduate education and training in the various recognized areas for the benefits of the state and country. These Programmes are designed to provide high level personnel capable of conducting independent research and providing intellectual and corporate leadership at national and international levels. The Post Graduate Programmes will ensure training facilities are made available for those whose future career is tuned within academic responsibility of teaching and research at this University (KWASU) and national institutions and those whose desire is to operate in the global environment and producing manpower for global competitiveness. The justification for these programmes is predicated on the wide gap between the demand and the supply of manpower required in these fields of study, particularly as it relates to the academic supply gap in the Nigerian University System. Kwara State University, being one of the Nigerian Universities is not left out of the pains of this supply gap, and would therefore be contributing towards filling the gap through the introduction of these programmes.

### **NEED OF THE STUDY**

The nature of information is not easy to describe. Perhaps the most explicit definition in the literature defines information as recorded experience that is used in decision-making. Today, information technology has developed rapidly and has had a huge impact on access to information and on information seeking behavior. The librarian and library-staff have to know and examine the criteria of information seeking and information utility by users for providing information services, designing new information systems, intervening in the operation of existing systems, or planning service programs. The present human society is living in an information age and as a consequence, human has become more and more information conscious. More and more people deliberately and consciously seek information and it has become an integral part of human activity especially in the area of education, research and development, production and marketing of goods, all of which have contributed to the improvement of the quality of life. World War I and II accelerated research and development activities resulting in information explosion. The information so produced is recorded and reported in a variety of documents-printed and media documents. The information explosion coupled with multiplicity of documents has caused problems to the generators, users, and the organizers of information. The users of information are finding difficulty in identifying and physically locating the relevant information at the time when it is required. In this context, the libraries, being the reservoirs of knowledge and the centers of learning, have a greater responsibility in providing the right information to the right user at the right time, in the right form so that the information will be put to maximum use, thereby promoting the use of information. To achieve this, the Libraries/Information Centers need to be planned based on the needs and requirements of the clientele of the libraries.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The present study is entitled, “Information needs and Information seeking Behavior of postgraduate Students of kwara state University, Malet.” the need for this research was because of the objectives and Mission of the programme that students are expected to compete with research output across the globe.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study examined the information seeking behavior and Information needs of Post Graduate students in Kwara state university malete. Precisely, the focus was on obtaining information on the nature of academic information needed by the students, the sources consulted and the general pattern of information gathering system by the students. More specifically, the objectives of the study were:

- To study the information needs and seeking behavior of Post Graduate Students in Kwara State University.
- To identify the types and range of information resources used currently by Post Graduate Students and determine the level of their use
- To investigate the availability of information resources that affects the information seeking patterns and communication process of Post Graduate Students.
- To determine whether or not different kinds of information need leads to different information seeking behavior and communication channels
- To identify the information searching methods adopted while searching for information in the library
- To suggest measures for enhancing the use of information sources, and seeking a synthesis of theoretical elements from information science

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

### **Study Population and Sampling Tool:**

The population of this study consists of Post Graduate Students of Kwara State University malete. As it is not possible to study the entire population in view of time and cost, a sample of 630 Post Graduate Students has been selected by stratified random sampling method. The Post Graduate students covered in the study are from Humanities and Social Sciences and Education. The Post Graduate Students were stratified on the basis of the disciplines of their study: Humanities and Social Sciences and Educations Out of the 931 Post Graduate Students thus selected, 630 students returned the questionnaire, with an overall response rate of 75.81%. The sample for the present study is composed of 630 students.

### **Data Collection:**

Questionnaires and interview methods were used in this study, with self-administered and hand delivered questionnaires distributed to the student respondents. Semi-structured indepth face-to-face interviews were used to collect data from their information seeking endeavors. The tools designed to elicit research information in order to identify the factors including socio economic factors which are liable to affect the information seeking behavior such as nature of the information need, the purpose it would serve or the existence of external barriers posed by the environment of Post Graduate Students in the University. As the study population was scattered and a large population was involved, the questionnaire method was adopted for collecting research data keeping in view of the objectives of the study. It was also felt necessary to adopt interview method to overcome the limitation of the questionnaire especially among some students, who could not respond to questionnaire owing to shortage of time. Under such

circumstances, interview schedule was employed in obtaining research data from the Post Graduate Students of kwara state University as a supplement to questionnaire method.

### **Statistical Inference:**

The data collected from the respondents of the study was coded and decoded by feeding the independent variable of information seeking behavior and Information needs in the SPSS-Statistical Package in Social Sciences (11.0 version).

### **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study is confined to Post Graduate Students of kwara state University Malete to understand their information seeking behavior and needs. The university environment is of a heterogeneous group comprising Post Graduate Students, Research Scholars and Teaching Faculty in the purview of information seeking channel and instead of covering all the groups of users, only Post Graduate Students have been taken for the research study. This is the limitation of the study. This is to cover mainly a fair proportion of students representing all the departments instead of becoming a sample representation of a few departments.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Majid, Shaheen and Kassim Gava Mugeraa(2000) narrates information needs and seeking behavior of users is vital for developing library collections, services and facilities to meet their information needs effectively. The purpose of this study is to identify the information channels used by the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) students information sources preferred by them methods employed for getting the needed information and their library use pattern. Shokeen and Kushik (2002) studied information seeking behavior of social scientists working in the universities located in Haryana. They reported most of the social scientists visit the library daily. The first preferred method of searching the required information by the social scientists followed by searching through indexing and abstracting periodicals, and citations in articles respectively. The social scientists use current journals followed by books. Cothey (2002) examined the information seeking behavior of 206 college students using the World Wide Web during a 10-month period. The study was intended to suggest how the general population uses the web. It was concluded that Web users have become more passive and more eclectic as they become more using the Web. Chikonzo and Aina (2006) researched into the information needs and sources of information used by students at the University of Zimbabwe. Findings from the study revealed that writing assignments and studying for tests or examination were the primary tasks for which they required information and the major sources used to obtain information were books, videos, lecture notes, handouts, the internet, projects, CD-ROM database and journals. The students confirmed making little use of indexes, abstracts and dissertations. Ajiboye and Adeyinka (2007) examined the information seeking behavior of postgraduate students in the University of MKU. The result of the study revealed that the internet is the most consulted source followed by students' class notes and handouts. Barrett (2005) made an explanatory

research on the information seeking habits of graduate student researchers in the humanities, by conducting in-depth interviews with a small sample of humanities graduate students, were used to explore to what extent humanities graduate students might constitute a user group distinct from faculty and undergraduate models. The study of Ajiboye and Tella (2007) conducted on university undergraduate's information seeking behaviour show that 12% of the respondents (students) required information for their personal development, while 11.25% claimed that they sought for information on health matter, and 64.1% sought for information for their academic development, 9.3% seeks information to secure employment. Also, Bhatti (2010) using faculty members at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, respondents indicated their purposes of seeking information eighty-eight percent sought information for teaching purpose (preparing class lectures), 68 percent for literature searches, 43 percent to borrow books or journal articles, fifty-four percent of faculty members consult the library for research and 43 percent for keeping their knowledge up to date, and 27 percent visit the library for reading newspapers and magazines (recreational purposes). This clearly show that nearly all the respondents use library resources or seek for information for teaching with more than half seeking for research and a smaller number for various other purposes. Fulton, Kerins and Madden (2004) report the results of two empirical studies which explored the information seeking behavior of engineering and law students in Ireland. The findings reveal similar patterns in the information seeking behavior between students studying to become professionals and information seeking patterns of these groups. Students learned their information seeking strategies, including effective and less effective approaches, from educators. Misperceptions of the role and value of libraries and information professionals in their studies were common, and as a result, students often adopted information seeking strategies that excluded libraries and library staff. The two studies suggest that engineering and law students in Ireland could benefit from greater information literacy training and awareness, enabling them to acquire the information skills they need to function effectively and efficiently in their future professional work lives. Hanson (1964) revealed that 24% of the scientists in atomic energy in UK undertake information searching on their own.

### **Results and Discussion:**

The results of the user observations, questionnaire schedule, interviews and participatory design sessions provide a rich description of how information seekers use various information sources, searching methods employed in obtaining desired information and problems of not using information resources, if any. The research study is confined to Post Graduate students of Kwara State University the departments of the university have been broadly classified under major disciplines representing Humanities, Social Sciences and Education. Discipline-wise distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Discipline-wise Distribution of Respondents**

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Humanities &amp; Social Sciences</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>530</b>	

It is found from the Table 1 that, more or less, the students covered in the study belong to the disciplines of Social Sciences (39.4%) and Education discipline (41.6%).

However, 19% of students represent Humanities, which is less when as compared to Social

Sciences and Education discipline mainly because of the less number of departments under Humanities and their total intake of students.

### **FREQUENCY OF USE OF LIBRARY:**

Library and Information Centre is a knowledge bank considered to be the heart of the University enriched with variety of information sources and services in print and electronic format to support learning, teaching and research. Attempts were made to understand the habit of using the library by the Post Graduate students in a university. Table 2 showing the frequency of visits to the library.

**Table 2: Frequency of Using Library by Respondents**

**Frequency of Visit No. of Respondents Percent**

<b>Everyday</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>58.3%</b>
<b>Alternative day</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>20.3%</b>
<b>Once in a week</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>12.5%</b>
<b>Do not use Library</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>630,100</b>	

It is clear from the Table 2 that, all the respondents of the study i.e. Post Graduate Students of university area in the habit of using the library. Among them, about 58.3% of respondents visit the library every day, 20.3% of respondents visit the library every alternate day, 12.5% of respondents visit once in a week, 8.4% of respondents visit the library occasionally and a very negligible portion opine that they do not use library.

### **PURPOSE OF USING LIBRARY**

Library should be viewed as an integral part and parcel of every academician to encourage, motivate and support not only learning and research but also to develop ideal citizens of the country. Thus, the purpose of visiting the library is equally important for optimization of respondents' knowledge to support their educational endeavor. Table 3 shows the purpose of seeking information by the respondents of the study.

**Table 3: Purpose of Using Library**

**Purpose No. of Respondents Percent**

<b>Preparing for examination</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>34.1%</b>
<b>Preparing project work</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>11.7%</b>
<b>Preparing for competitive examination</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>25.4%</b>
<b>Preparing for Dissertation work</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
<b>Preparing Notes</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
<b>General Reading</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>630,100</b>	

It is noted from the Table 3 that, about 34.1% of respondents' purpose of visiting the library is preparing for examinations. This is followed by respondents using the library to prepare for competitive examinations (25.4%). About 16.7% of respondents use the library to prepare the notes and preparing project work (11.7%). Least of the respondents are preparing for dissertation work (9.5%) and general reading (2.6%). Thus general tendency for visiting the library by the Post Graduate students is to prepare for general examinations and prepare for competitive examinations. It was asked to the Post Graduate students as to whether they need instruction on how to use information sources in their subject areas for more effective use of libraries. The table 4 shows the result.

**Table 4 : Need for Instruction/Guidance for Using Various Information Sources**  
**Instructions/Guidance**  
**No. of Respondents Percent**

<b>Agree</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>66.5%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>20.8%</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>12.1%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>630,100</b>	

It is clear from the Table 4 that, 66.5% and 20.8% of respondents agree and strongly agree that they need instruction on how to use information sources in their subject areas for more effective use of the library. While 12.1% of respondents are neutral in their attitude towards need for instruction on using information sources in their subject areas and very negligible portion of respondents disagree for undertaking instructions in using the library resources. Thus, most of the respondents of the study opined the need for instruction on using information sources in their subject areas. Internet is presumed to be used for academic and research endeavor, but besides these purposes, internet may be used for different purposes also. To check the purpose behind using the internet by the respondents, Table 5 present the following.

**Table 5: Purpose of Using Internet Technology**  
**Purpose of Using Internet**  
**No. of Respondents Percent**

<b>Research Project</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>42.9%</b>
<b>Means of communication</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>17.9%</b>
<b>Download Programs</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>17.9%</b>
<b>Professional Development</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>10.5%</b>
<b>Chatting</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2.5%</b>
<b>Do not use internet</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
<b>Total 630 100</b>		

It is seen from the table 5 that, quite surprisingly internet is used mainly for research project (42.9%) than for communication (17.9%) and downloading programs (17.9%). However, the other purpose of using internet by the respondents is for professional development (10.5%), entertainment (2.5%) and chatting (0.8%). Thus the result shows that, research projects, communication and downloading programs are the purposes of using internet. The results confirms with the study conducted at Large south western University (Drnek, 1998), which reveals that the most frequent response from the students to use the internet was conducting research and obtaining additional information on topics of interest for class, followed by e-mail communication. Frequency of using various library services by the post Graduate students is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 : Frequency of Using Library Services**

**Library Services**  
**Inter-Library Loan**  
**Reference Services**  
**Photocopy Service**  
**CD-ROM Search**  
**Book Reservation-**  
**Circulation**

<b>Never use the above</b>	<b>332,162,354,370, 364</b>	
<b>Some time</b>	<b>95,95,52,46,45</b>	
<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>14,30,13,11,17</b>	
<b>Often</b>	<b>64,89,66,67,70</b>	
<b>Very Often</b>	<b>125,254,145,136,134.</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>630</b>	

It is indicated from the Table 6 that, among the various information services, reference service (254) is very often used service as compared to other library services. The library services in general used quite often and occasionally is almost same for the inter-library loan, reference service, photocopy service, CD-ROM search, book reservation-circulation and bound periodicals overnight service. However, more than half of the respondents of the study indicated that they never use inter-library loan, reference, photocopy service, CD-ROM search and book reservation-circulation.

**Summary of Findings:**

The significant findings of the study are given below:

- All the respondents are in the habit of using the library and more than half of them visit the library every day and one-fifth visit the library every alternate day and a very negligible portion do not use the library and they are having their personal book collection.
- The main purpose of visiting the library is preparing for examinations, followed by preparing for competitive examinations and dissertation work.
- Educational information is the pre-dominantly used information-need for the respondents useful for their academic and research activities followed by employment and job related information.

- All the respondents of the study undertake information searching on their own to meet their desired educational needs.
- More than half of the respondents have undergone formal training in information searching.
- Two-third and one-fourth of the respondents agree and strongly agree that they need instruction on how to use information sources in their subject areas for effective use of library.
- Majority of the respondents are using books to support their curriculum and examinations needs of the course Finance 94.6%. Thus books remain a popular source of information to the Post Graduate students in for their academic course and for curriculum support.
- Among the Post Graduate students not using books, the reasons for not using are lack of sufficient number of copies of books and non-availability of latest editions of books.
- Almost all the respondents use internet technology for their academic and research activity.
- The main purpose of using internet is for research project than for communication and downloading programs.
- Browsing website and search engines are the most preferred methods for finding information on the internet.
- E-reference books and e-journals are the types of electronic information sources browsed on the internet by the respondents.
- Major reasons for not using internet are mainly the fact that, respondents are not interested in accessing internet and feel lack of training in browsing the internet.
- Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that information resources in the university library are adequately stocked.
- More than four-fifth of the respondents indicated the availability of adequate books on competitive examinations.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

Information seeking is widely used in information sciences to encompass the entire process from recognizing the need for information to finding and using it. It focuses on interaction between the information seeker and information resources. In fact, it is a cyclic or interactive process by nature and is more than simply gathering information, encompasses posing and identifying the question, exploring available information; coming back to refine the question, gathering and evaluating further information, and synthesizing and using it. This cyclic process of gathering, sorting, evaluating and refining may be carried out a number of times. A holistic view of information seeking process comes near to ideas of inquiry learning. They both emphasize an iterative question-driven process of finding, managing and evaluating information. An additional aspect of inquiry learning is its collaborative nature, which gives rise to a challenge of arranging collaborative situations of information seeking with heterogeneous groups of students. A naïve way of students' information seeking process emerged through empirical studies. Instead of being a holistic process, it manifests itself in the form of information gathering only, and uncritical acceptance of information.

When learning activities are focused on information gathering, such important phases as refining the question, evaluating and synthesizing information, is easily neglected.

The results of the study emphasize the need for better orientation about library resources and services and user-training workshops especially in using and searching skills for journals, abstracting sources (abstracting databases) and internet to support learning, teaching and research. There is a need to organize user-workshops in educating and training regarding the various information sources available that includes primary, secondary and tertiary information sources both print and e-format. Further, the information services extended by university library need to be strengthened as a majority of them are not using the information services extended by the library to an optimal extent. Using new technological devices merely for copy-pasting information is simply not enough. Instead, a new pedagogical culture, which is supported by technology, has to be carefully designed and put to use for developing students' information skills. In addition, it is important that new pedagogical models, which emphasize higher order information seeking activities, do not become an unmanageable additional cognitive load. The library plays a significant role in promoting the better use of information sources and services, but at the same time, the teacher plays an important role in coordinating and scaffolding students' learning activities towards a comprehensive inquiry process. In addition to supporting students, it is also necessary to offer teachers new conceptual devices for understanding the potential and challenges of collaborative inquiry learning and to provide support for practical pedagogical implementation. The starting point for effective information seeking with technological support is thus embedded in a sound theoretical understanding of the information seeking process, as it is intertwined with meaningful pedagogical practices.

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