

Information needs and resource utilization by law students in federal universities in North Central Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated information needs and resource utilization by law students in federal universities in North Central Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted in carrying out the study. The population consisted of 3314 law students from which a sample of 331 was drawn and used for the study. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw the sample. And proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used to select law students from each university. Accidental sampling technique was used during distribution of the questionnaire whereby any member of the population that was available at the time of distribution of the questionnaire was chosen. The data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviation. The results of the study among others showed law students mostly need information for preparation for examination and test, to complete class assignments; Out of nine major information resources needed in law libraries, seven were available, while two were not available; the students utilize most information sources to a large extent though university of Abuja law students utilizes the least of resources. The study recommended among others that the university management/librarians should endeavor to provide varied and adequate information resources so that the information needs of the students could be met; that effort should therefore be made to procure more of electronic resources.

Keywords: Information needs, Information availability, Resource utilization, information satisfaction, Law students, Universities, North Central Nigeria

Introduction

The aim of legal education in Nigeria is to produce graduates in the field of law in all categories of training. Law students are scholars undergoing training in the field of law and a graduate of law is expected to be skillful in the application of the law as a tool to resolve social, cultural, and political disputes in the society. Law school is primarily targeted at developing lawyers whose degree of experience will better qualify them to act as consultants to governments and its agencies, companies, business firms, associations, individuals and families, etc” (Oke-Samuel, 2008).

Studying law at the university takes the student into critical analysis and review of his community and secondary dominant social, cultural, and political structures as an

academic exercise aimed at studying and assessing the operation, efficacy and importance of various laws in the society.

Libraries play a key role in the quest for legal education among law students. The library collects academic research materials for access and provides physical space for the law students information needs. These resources promote access to knowledge and information, expand opportunities to be in contact with up-to-date and high-quality materials, enhance bibliographic research and provide tools for developing and updating personal bibliographic material collections. Therefore, library information resources are important to law students.

Measuring user satisfaction is one of the critical methods for assessing the efficacy of library services. Angelova and Zekiri

(2011) identified user satisfaction as the means by which users determine any products or services that fulfill their needs and expectations desired. Therefore, if the information services available do not satisfy the information needs of the user, it is believed that they are dissatisfied with the resources available.

It is necessary for library management to determine the information needs of law students, as it helps to determine the appropriateness of library resources in meeting students' demands. Need for information is something that cannot be directly observed and its "unseen structures". It exists in the user's mind, but when resources are evidently utilized, it can be seen. The need for knowledge is complex, constantly evolving and not generalizable. Good knowledge of library clientele's information needs is very paramount to avoid misallocation of information resources.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the information needs and resource utilization by law students in federal universities in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, the study set out to:

1. investigate the information needs of law students in federal universities in North Central Nigeria;
2. identify the types of resources available for use or utilization in the libraries by the law students; and
3. find out level of satisfaction by law students from utilizing the information resources.

Research questions

The study sought to find answers to the following research questions;

1. What are the information needs of law students in federal universities in North Central Nigeria?

2. What are the types of information resources available for utilization by the law students in the study?
3. To what extent do the available resources meet the information needs of the law students in the study?

Literature review

According to Waldron (2020), those studying for legal profession can be counted on to have a solid knowledge of federal and state constitution, statutes, and court rules if they access relevant legal information. Beyond that, the scope of each practice determines the specific of legal information for ready reference and research. The legal information needed by users varies because of the variety of cases handled, studied and areas they are studying for specialization. Law students need reports and theories mostly to enhance their learning process and subsequent applications. While practicing lawyers need access to statutes, acts of parliament, and decrees that are legislations passed by the government and are basically arranged according to years accompanied with an index. Haruna and Mabawonku (2001) states that the three highest ranking types of information sought by those studying for legal profession are knowing the latest decisions of superior courts, knowing most recent legislation and obtaining information on local and international seminars.

Oyesiku (2005) pointed out that the information needs of law students cut across educational, psychological, and social needs. While this might be the case, information needs of law students specifically deal with research and teaching in matters of law and legal practices, information on new laws and recent enactments, research findings arising from conferences, seminars, workshops, and academic journals. Information that has to do with current affairs, public administration, governance and general knowledge constitute knowledge of law students. Oke-Samuel

(2008) observed that law students in Nigeria generally need law information sources in order to pass examinations, conduct legal research, complete assignments and thesis to enable them graduate from the university. Accordingly, the law students' aspiring to enter into the legal profession require mainly primary information for both academic and research purposes, and they need to be able to use available law library sources and electronic resource to prepare for lectures, conferences, and "Mock" or trial courts. For law students who appear in "Mock" or trial courts, possession of relevant knowledge can be pivotal in the outcome of their cases. While the required information is mostly of a legal nature, occasionally, information of a more general nature might be also essential, especially when background information pertaining to a case is required.

Sources mean the origin of something. An information source is a medium through which people acquire information in the society. Information resources provide knowledge to the user. They may be observations, people, speeches, documents, pictures, among others. They have a great role to play in developing the society by creating awareness, entertaining, informing and most importantly educating the user and the society at large.

Different epistemologies have different views regarding the importance of different kinds of information sources. However, the various types of information resources can be divided into two broad categories that include; documentary and non-documentary information resources (Anand, 2017). Documentary sources are generally published or recorded documents of knowledge. They may be under primary sources, secondary sources and tertiary sources. Primary sources are original documents representing unfiltered original ideas. They present new facts, and help guide research efforts in the proper direction. They

appear in several forms most of which are periodicals, patents, terminal reports, notebooks, diaries, archives, proceedings, transactions, thesis, dissertations, manuscripts, and recordings, acts of parliaments, legislations and reported decisions of courts and tribunals (McQuade, 2020). According to Anand (2017), it can also be a person with direct knowledge of a situation or a document created by such a person eg; video recorder, voice or audio recordings, speeches among others.

Secondary sources of information are those which are either compile from or referring to primary sources of information (Ubwa and Ndor, 2020). Secondary sources of information according to Parker and Turkey (McQuade, 2020) include all organized information that has been compiled from original sources and arranged according to some definite plan. They include monographs from original sources and arranged according to some definite plan. They include monographs, textbooks, treaties, manuals, and guides, encyclopedia, digest, cases, textbooks, formats, dictionaries, abstracts and indexes, bibliographies and e-legal information (Anand, 2017).

Tertiary sources of information, according to Ozioko (2004), are published items like reviews compilations, monographs, books treating, trained reports, social conventions, services like guide to references materials among others. They are also semi-published like lectures notes, government publications, advertisements, announcements, and unpublished types like letters, symposiums, workshops, data bases, and information centres. Tertiary sources of information according to (ESC, 2020) contain information distilled and collected from primary and secondary sources. Non documentary sources of information are live sources that provide information instantly and they comprise of formal and informal sources (Singh 2011). Formal non

documentary sources, include organizations, societies, industries, universities, consultants, etc. while informal sources include conversations with colleagues, visitors, friends and peers, attendance at professional meetings etc. (Singh, 2011).

What should make up a standard legal source environment? Dada (2011) states that, selection of major law reports, journals, and legal materials from developing countries, commonwealth jurisdictions, the United States and other parts of the world. Some non-legal materials that have bearing on legal research as well, as reference materials, and thesis and dissertations. He further states that there is a general book famine especially in the area of legal literature in Africa in particular and according to Schreuer (N.D) there are three types of legal information sources which includes; public legal sources, private and international legal information sources.

Public legal information sources are sources that contained information that includes; laws that govern relationship between the citizens and the state. Example includes; criminal legal information sources and the constitution. A private legal information source provides information that governs the relationship between citizens. These include various relationships people have with one another, and rules that determines the rights and duties among themselves. Private legal information basically addresses legal matters concerning rights of citizens, and how they are supposed to live with each other under the law. Example of this include; family legal information, business legal information. International legal information sources as the name implies are the sources of information that gives information that covers relations among nations within the legal frame workout line by international governing bodies.

To Singh (2011), there are distinct information sources available in the legal discipline which differs from those available in other disciplines. It includes both primary and secondary legal sources. The primary sources of law are divided into two categories, i.e. (a) legislation (i.e. statutes and regulations) and (b) case law (court decisions and administrative tribunals). According to him, primary legal resources are the products of the legislature i.e. the official bodies within the authority that make laws. Secondary legal sources are the sources cited in courts for their informative values, and thus provide relevant reference to primary sources of law. Secondary legal sources include law textbooks, legal journals, legal encyclopedia, case law digests, and electronic database resources. The electronic resources in a law library can include; West law, LexisNexis, Legalpedia, Campulaw and Ebscohost. Secondary legal resources can be excellent starting point for legal research because; it provides a broad overview of the law.

According to Fiankor and Adam (2004), most individuals seek information from their friends, neighbors, colleagues, groups meetings, such as religious group, cooperative societies or associations. According to them, when information required by the user is so complex, he or she resorts to the libraries.

Satisfying the request of users implies providing the actual information or services that will meet the needs of an information seeker. Library resources are very critical to users' satisfaction. However, no library can satisfy all its users all the time. Some libraries have limited resources and are unable to satisfy their users, whereas others are large in size with adequate materials and a variety of services. Obviously, libraries that are able to provide users with their needs achieve high-level of users' satisfaction.

Tetteh and Nyantakyi-Baah (2019) observed that the use of library by the users and indeed their satisfaction with library services depends on availability of suitable learning materials, accommodation, and competent staff in the library. Bausman, Ward and Pell (2014) reported that users were satisfied with the library overall services and automation helps them search and locate resources quickly and efficiently. In another study by Bindhu and Balasubramanian (2019) on information seeking behavior reveals that the availability of resources can have significant influence on users' satisfaction. It is important to note however that the quality of the resources may be judged from an overall perception as to whether the library can provide access to materials when and where needed and it is this overall perception of a library resource that contribute to user satisfaction. Thus, the higher the perceived quality of the library resources the greater the level of user satisfaction; the greater responsibility of the library staff the greater the level of satisfaction among users and the greater the perceived competence of the library staff the greater level of user satisfaction. Also, the better the perceived overall physical appearance of the library faculties, the greater the level of user satisfaction. MacDonald, Wells, Cordes, Hutton, Cossarini, and Soonai (2010) stated that for a good library to satisfy user needs, it must have the following qualities; relevant resources, ensure that adequate storage is provided for the collection, provide access to the collection through classification, cataloguing and other arrangement, develop strategies for access to grey literature and other formats of information that are unpublishable or in non-traditional formats, put in place special library services to make library resources and services available through interlibrary loans, telephone calls and other means, facilitate retrieval of resources through self-help, or an

intermediary who could be a librarian or an information expert, provide strategies for evaluation of information resources and services at stated intervals.

According to Chinwe, Andrew and Ngozi (2013), satisfaction of the contextual information needs involves unique information services which could be in the form of telephone, recreational, advisory services, extension/outreach services, socio-political, current awareness, children advisory services, selective dissemination of information, book mobile and referral services. In a study of the utilization of information resources by MBA students at a Nigerian university, result states that, students are satisfied more with lectures, internet, textbooks and colleagues. They consider them more significant than information centers and research reports.

Thanuskodi (2010) in a study of the effective use of e-resource materials among practicing lawyers of Madras high court concludes that information on the web is increasingly becoming popular day-by-day and various types of data and opportunities to explore are made available. Discussion groups, relay chatting, software packages, biographical notes, daily news, various high court judgment, research communication, institutional publications, government programmes, and policies are accessible and the fact was that; the amount of information/services hosted on the web has being very fast but consumers spend considerable amount of time in browsing and getting hold of relevant information in a precise form that satisfy their needs.

Studies revealed that a number of resources are used by library users for various reasons to satisfy their various information needs. Thanuskodi (2009) in his study of information seeking behaviour of law faculty at central law college, Salem revealed that the respondents used information technology based library

resources and facilities less frequently compared with printed sources. It might be due to the lack of awareness about their availability, improper selection of materials, or unfamiliarity with these products. E-mail was the most popular internet application, whereas other internet based services and application were used by a limited number of respondents. This is a matter of concern as presently, electronic information sources and the internet are considered extremely important tools for effective teaching and research and it was recommended that the central law college library should review its electronic information resources.

Methods

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of this study consisted of all the law students in University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), University of Jos (UNI JOS) and University of Ilorin (UNILORIN). The data were obtained from the list of registered students in 2019/2020 session in the office of academic officers of University of Abuja, University of Jos and University of Ilorin. University of Ilorin had 825 registered law students, University of Jos 1129 and University of Abuja 1360 law undergraduate students. The sample size of the study is 331. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw the respondents for the study. Three Federal Universities were purposively selected namely: University of Abuja, University of Ilorin, and University of Jos. They cut across different states in the North central geographical zone of Nigeria. Also, according to the accreditation status and approved quota of recognized faculties of law in Nigeria universities from the Council of Legal Education in Nigeria, only these federal universities that have been given various status of accreditation in North Central Nigeria. The number of students used as respondents was 3314. (That is., University of Ilorin with 825 law students -

10% of which was 82.5 -, University of Abuja 1360 - 10% was 135 - and University of Jos with a population of 1129 - 10% of which was 112). Thus, 331 (10% of the 3314 law students) were used as sample of the study. The accidental sampling technique was used for the research whereby any member of the population that was not available at the time of the distribution of the questionnaire was not chosen. In addition, the observation checklist with listed items was used to find out the available information resources in faculty of law libraries of the universities. The researchers took a critical observation of the available resources in these libraries using the observation checklist. The data collected were analyzed base on each research question. Frequency was generated, percentages computed and mean calculated. Also tables were used to present the analysed data.

Result and discussion

The results are presented according to the research questions.

Research question one: What are the information needs of law students in federal universities in North Central Nigeria?

The data in Table 1 are used to answer this question.

Data presented in Table 1 reveal that all eighteen items are accepted as information needs of law students in the universities since their mean scores are above the criterion mean (2.50). However, UNIABUJA and UNI JOS attracted the highest mean of 3.44 in information for preparation for examinations and test, followed by UNI JOS information on global issues and employment 3.69 and 3.38 respectively and then information to a complete class assignment 3.37 from university of Abuja. While preparation for examinations and test attracted the highest score of overall mean of 3.35 followed by to

complete class assignments and information on their course of study and professional activities with overall mean of 3.25 and 3.12 respectively.

The cluster mean of 2.69, 2.91, 2.81 for UNIABUJA, UNILORIN, UNIJOS respectively and an overall mean of 3.35 for the universities implied that the law students in the universities need information on various things not only for things related to their course of study.

Research question two: What are the types of information resources available for utilization by the students in the study?

The data in Table 2 are used to answer this question.

Table 2 shows that oral information sources were available to the students in all the three universities; that digital library and conference/workshops/seminar papers were only available in UNIJOS to the students.

Research question three: To what extent do the available resources meet the information needs of the students in the study?

Research question three is answered with the data in Table 3

Table 3 shows the mean rating of the respondents on the extent to which the available resources meet the information needs of the students used in the study. The results reveal that fiction information resources met the information needs of the students in UNIABUJA, UNILORIN, UNIJOS to a large extent ($\bar{x}=2.34$), Non – fiction Information Resources meet the information needs of the students to a large extent ($\bar{x}=2.87$) Reference Information Resources to a large extent ($\bar{x}=2.66$), Government publications meet the information needs to large extent ($\bar{x}=2.65$), Grey Literature also to a large extent ($\bar{x}= 2.92$), Serials also to a large extent ($\bar{x}=2.62$), AV/ICT/e-resources to a large extent ($\bar{x}=2.72$), and Oral information sources also meet to a large extent ($\bar{x}=3.01$) in the law libraries in North central Nigeria. This shows that to a high extent the available resources meet the information needs of the students in the study.

Table 1: Mean ratings on information needs of law students

Information Needs	Name of institution						Overall		R	D
	UNIABUJA		UNILORIN		UNIJOS		\bar{x}	SD		
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD				
For preparation for examinations and test	3.44	.70	3.23	.85	3.44	.76	3.35	.79	1 st	A
To complete class assignments	3.37	.76	3.23	.87	3.20	.82	3.25	.83	2 nd	A
On my course of study and professional activities	2.93	1.16	3.14	.96	3.25	1.01	3.12	1.04	3 rd	A
To supplement notes given by lecturers	3.21	.89	3.31	.88	2.45	.88	2.97	3.31	4 th	A
On health	3.32	.98	3.34	.89	2.12	.78	2.94	3.12	5 th	A
On global issues	2.00	.69	3.14	1.02	3.69	.82	2.89	3.69	6 th	A
Information on scholarship and academic development	2.81	1.10	2.89	1.19	2.79	1.25	2.83	1.19	7 th	A
On employment	2.24	.80	2.97	.88	3.38	.75	2.83	3.38	7 th	A
On sports and sports development	2.94	1.03	2.74	1.07	2.66	1.15	2.76	1.09	8 th	A
For seminar or preparation for workshops and conferences	2.65	1.26	2.85	1.15	2.51	1.19	2.68	1.20	9 th	A
For class group discussion/tutorial preparation	2.71	.99	2.58	1.07	2.77	.99	2.68	1.02	9 th	A
For tutorial preparation	2.57	1.34	2.83	1.32	2.56	1.28	2.67	1.31	10 th	A
To do my project/thesis/research	2.48	1.21	2.77	1.16	2.60	1.15	2.64	1.18	11 th	A
To keep up with current development /update	1.47	.50	3.21	3.53	2.83	.77	2.64	1.47	11 th	A
On government policies/programme	2.74	1.13	2.59	1.17	2.55	1.11	2.62	1.14	12 th	A
For leisure/entertainment/relaxation	2.59	1.20	2.56	1.19	2.64	1.18	2.59	1.19	13 th	A
On politics, and economy	2.39	1.19	2.60	1.21	2.53	1.28	2.53	1.23	14 th	A
On security matters	2.43	1.23	2.54	1.19	2.53	1.13	2.50	1.18	15 th	A
Cluster mean	2.69	.49	2.91	.51	2.81	.41	3.35	.48		A

Key: D = Disagree A = Agree

Table 2: Mean ratings on types of information resources available for utilization by the students

Types of information resources	UNIABUJA		UNILORIN		UNI JOS		Overall		D
	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV	NA	
Fiction information resources		√		√		√	0(0%)	3(100%)	NA
Non-fiction information resources		√	√		√		2(667%)	1(33.3%)	AV
Reference information resources		√	√		√		2(667%)	1(33.3%)	AV
Government publications		√	√		√		2(667%)	1(33.3%)	AV
Grey literature		√		√	√		1(33.3%)	2(667%)	NA
Serials		√	√		√		2(667%)	1(33.3%)	AV
AV/ICT/e-resources		√	√		√		2(667%)	1(33.3%)	AV
Oral information sources	√	A	√		√		3(100%)	0(0%)	AV
Total	2(22.2%)	7(77.8%)	7(77.8%)	2(22.2%)	8(88.9%)	1(11.1%)			

Key: AV = Available, NA = Not Available

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which the available resources meet the information needs of the students in the study

Resources	Name of Institution						Overall		R	D
	UNIABUJA		UNILORIN		UNI JOS		\bar{x}	SD		
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD				
Fiction information resources	1.85	.87	2.54	.95	2.49	.67	2.34	.78	1 st	LE
Oral information sources	3.03	.58	3.09	.87	2.84	.91	3.00	.93	3 rd	HE
Grey literature	2.78	.88	2.95	.65	2.92	.58	2.92	.90	4 th	HE
Non-fiction information Resources	1.94	.56	3.16	.90	3.22	.74	2.87	.97	5 th	HE
reference information Resources	1.87	.67	2.89	.98	2.98	.56	2.66	.93	6 th	HE
government publications	1.81	.46	2.79	.86	2.96	.77	2.65	.67	7 th	HE
AV/ICT/e-resources	1.70	.95	2.72	.86	3.00	.85	2.72	.67	8 th	HE
Serials	2.20	.64	2.69	.97	2.73	.78	2.62	.67	9 th	HE
Cluster mean	2.20	0.46	2.90	0.22	2.91	0.19	2.75	0.20		HE

Key: 0.5 – 1.49 = No Extent (NE), 1.5 – 2.49 = Little Extent (LE), 2.50 – 3.49 = High Extent (HE), 3.50 – 4.00 Very High Extent (VHE).

Discussion

The findings of this study as regards research question one: Information needs of law students in federal universities in North Central Nigeria showed that all the listed information resources in table one were

needed by the law students. They mostly needed information for preparation of examinations and tests to complete class assignment and subsequent others. Also the data analyzed indicated that, law students do not only need information for their legal

education but also on health, global issues and sports. The findings therefore are in conformity with the that of Oke-Samuel (2008) who observed that law students in Nigeria generally need law sources in order to pass their examinations, conduct legal research, to complete assignment and project, dissertations and thesis to enable them to graduate from the university.

The findings of this study as regards research question two: types of information resources available for utilization by the students revealed that there are information resources available in the faculties of law libraries in the study. The result presented in Table 2 showed that out of eight information resources, six were available while two were not available. It is interesting to note that both University of Ilorin and University of Jos have greater number of information resources for law students, but university of Abuja law students enjoy little information resources due to the fact that law library is under construction. The study identified the most available information resources which includes non-fiction resources, reference information resources, government publications, grey literature, serials, AV/ICT/e-resources and oral information sources were available for the students. The findings of this study collaborates Singh (2011) who observed that there are both primary and secondary sources of information in law libraries. It is very important, therefore, to employ a variety of mechanisms while choosing information sources for law students for their everyday information needs and resources utilization. This is because one may miss out relevant information contained in the sources he or she does not choose as all information resources are reliable to a certain information needs or a combination of both.

The findings of this study as regards research question 3: what extent do the available resources meet the information

needs of the students revealed that the information needs of law students in federal universities in North Central Nigeria which are in the areas of education, health, security, current affairs welfare, career, sports, politics and global information needs are met to a large extent. This corroborates Fiankor and Adam (2004) who maintained that when information required by the user is so complex, he or she resorts to the libraries. Therefore, for one's information need to be met, one must visit a source of desirable information. This is because information needs cannot just be met without consulting information sources or channels. Thus, the availability of the information resources to the law libraries paved way for meeting the information needs of the law students to a very high extent. It is important to state that the extent to which information resources meet the information needs of law students depend on the quality of the information product, the information system or the resources and the service that brought the information to bear. In effect, for an information resource to become satisfactory, it must be accurate, complete, precise, easy to use, and relevant to the users who consult it.

Conclusion

The result of the findings showed that law students have information needs. The students need information for preparation for examinations, assignments, etc. The university management/law librarians should endeavor to provide varied and adequate information resources so that the information needs of the students could be met. Information resources available in these libraries are still more of the printed materials; effort should therefore be made to procure more of electronic resources. The observed non availability of a functional law library in university of Abuja calls for quick completion and equipping of the library under construction. The low extent of

utilization of resources calls for the need of the management of the libraries to improve on information resources provision and delivery to the law students.

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