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Maryamu Yashim

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ABSTRACT

The study examined how information resources are made available, accessible, accurate, relevant and are being utilized. The study sample population comprised of four departments in the school with 192 registered users of the library. The instrument used for data collection in this study was questionnaire. Research questions were answered using frequency count and percentages. The study adopts a purely quantitative method as means of data collection. Findings reveals that Textbooks are the most available (93 %), and internet resources have the highest percentage of rarely available material (22.6%) due to power supply issues or poor internet coverage. According to the research findings, all resources have comparable accessibility difficulties, with textbooks being the most easily accessible information source for students (61.3%). The majority of users visit the library during exams, while others (52%) only sometimes use its information resources. Students' library use is limited by several problems such as difficulties in retrieving required information, distance from home, operating hours, poor reading space, inadequate materials. On the above factors, respondents were overwhelmingly in agreement. The study recommended that usage of information resources be made compulsory to student by their lecturers, intensifying awareness campaigns concerning the availability of information resources and the problem of poor internet coverage be addressed.

Keywords: Academic Library, Availability, Accessibility, Utilization, Information Resources

INTRODUCTION

There has been growing concern about students accessing and utilizing library resources in Nigerian higher institutions. The term availability of information resources means to make information resources available in the library for immediate use of the library users for them to meet their information needs. To meet the timely information needs (current and future) of the library users, librarians work hard to gather, preserve, organize, and distribute all types of recorded knowledge. The essence of carrying out the above described responsibilities will be defeated if users could not access the information resources at their convenience. Supporting this, Viswanatha and Sasireka (2016) reiterated that timely and easy access to knowledge would undoubtedly

transform the library services because it would endear more users into the library. The time has passed when traditional or orthodox information resources constitute the sole repository of knowledge in the library. Presently, there are several other information sources that students and researchers could turn to whenever they are in need of information materials and interestingly, these sources provide access to information without any hindrance or delay. Thus, any library that does not want to be faced out as information providers should make its available resource accessible.

Most librarians believe that once they have information resources available in their libraries, access to the materials is guaranteed. Contrary to this believe, Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) stated that just because a source of information is available, it doesn't always mean that it is accessible. He stated further that, in certain cases, the source may be available, but access to it is restricted for various reasons. Thus, he warned librarians never to for any reason prevent users from having unhindered access to the information materials that they have available in the library. Following this line of reasoning, this study opines that students would see the library as a laboratory of information that is capable of catapulting their learning experiences to higher levels if they could adequately access and utilize the library collections. Just as it's impossible for scientists to function without a laboratory, the librarians at Federal Polytechnic, Ayede's library should note that the library is indispensable to teaching-learning process of students, researchers, and the entire polytechnic community. Going by the submissions of Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) that students need information resources that can be applied practically to their needs and enrich their knowledge; there is need for the polytechnic library to discharge its duties accordingly because an active library is the one that makes availability and accessibility of information materials seamless for its users. While doing this, the library must create a balance between a particular research and information needs vis-à-vis the usable collection of information resources that could meet the need of the users. Magoi and Elisha (2022) stated that acquisition of appropriate skills is central to the utilization of information resource, however, the authors did reiterate that utilization of library materials does not only depend on the acquisition of appropriate skills but also on the its accessibility, hence the need for this study.

The Federal Polytechnic Ayede Library

The Federal Polytechnic Ayede Library came into existence immediately after the establishment of its parent institution in 2021. Like other academic libraries, the library's main function is to support the teaching learning and research activities of her parent institution.

The library began the development of its collections by acquiring and selecting relevant books, periodicals, newspapers and other print & electronic resources required to satisfy the information needs of its users. The library currently houses two thousand and fifty-four (2,054) volumes of books and reference sources, and five hundred and thirty-nine (539) volumes of journals that cut across all the fields of study being floated by the institution. In addition to the printed collections, the library also subscribes to EBISCOHOST, a fee based database as well as twenty (20) different open source databases such as AGORA, HINARI, DOAB, Journal of Experimental Research, OAPEN, Online Library and Publication Platform, ARDI, GOALI, OARI, Emerald and Insight Database among others. Bearing in mind that Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) stated that investment in information resources acquisition by libraries will be tantamount to a waste money if such resources are not accessible to users; the librarians in the library made a lot

of concerted efforts to ensure that the acquired resources were properly organized for easy access of the users.

Statement of The Problem

Despite the importance of library information resources to academic success, extant studies Lawal Mohammed Tukur (2019) had reported that many users face challenges in accessing and utilizing these resources in some libraries, leading to a significant gap in existing knowledge. Many factors on the part of libraries such as outdated materials, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient staffing hindering the effective technical processing of information resources were identified as the factors that contribute to the underutilization of the resources. Since Federal Polytechnic Ayede Library is not affected by any of these issues, it is assumed that the library users (staff and students of the institution) have smooth access to the library holding which in turn enhance their level of utilization of the resources. A proper feedback is required from the library users to ascertain this, hence the need for this student.

Aims/Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study aim to:

- i. determine the types of information resources that are available to students in the library;
- ii. determine ease of accessibility of information resources to student in the library;
- iii. ascertain the frequency of use of information resources; and
- iv. identify factors militating against students' use of information resources in the library.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

- i. What types of information resources are available to students in the library?
- ii. What is the ease of accessibility of information resources to student in the library?
- iii. What is the frequency of use of information resources; and
- iv. What factors are militating against students' use of information resources in the library?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic libraries in Nigeria like their counterparts in developed countries have begun to see the need to provide high-quality information resources and services that could meet the needs of students. The efforts, so far, have encouraged them (students) to use the library services more frequently. Findings of some related studies are proofs to the above submission. For instance, a study by Uriel (2016), that examined the availability, accessibility, and utilization of information resources by students of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri using a questionnaire as a means of data collection found that students depend on the information resources provided largely in print format for their academic activities and that they used the library resources to support their classroom activities.

Abdulsaman *et.al* (2020) investigated the types of available resources that are accessible by undergraduate students at Fountain University Library. The study adopted a quantitative research approach by using questionnaire to gather data from nine hundred and fourteen (914) respondents. The results showed that in addition to the numerous printed information materials

that the library made available for the students, the library also provide access to e-resources via fee-based databases that cut across all the twelve programmes being run by the university. Mappar (2020) examined holistically the extent to which students have access to the resources of their library, the finding of the study showed that the library's information sources were restricted, and students could not fully explore the resources that were offered. This finding demonstrates the need for libraries to upgrade their technology and electronic resources in order to increase students' access to information beyond what is provided in print. Supporting this, Popoola *et.al* (2016) emphasized in their studies that a balance and sufficient supply of information resources in various formats are essential for an academic library to be effective.

As indicated above, Popoola *et.al* (2016) opined that availability of adequate resources in various formats is what makes a library an efficient information institution. However, Aguol and Aguol (2002) viewed that other than availability of information resources, library materials should be easily accessible for immediate use of users. Buttressing this, Tof *et. al* (2019) stated that access to information resources is extremely important and relevant to library customers because accessibility tackles challenges concerning the storage, display, and timely transmission of information resources to users. Following this line of reasoning, librarians must guide against any situation (Un-cataloged, miscataloged, miss-shelved etc.) that could make the acquired materials inaccessible for use to those who need them for whatever reason. Based on the above submissions, it is safe to say that availability comes before access, and access comes before use.

Maximum utilization of library information resources does not only depend on the availability of the resources and its organization but also on the acquisition of appropriate skills. It is on this basis that Hazrati (2014) advised that students and researchers must be equipped with basic

information skills such as: ability to determine nature and extend of information, ability to evaluate information needs, ability to access needed information and its source, ability to use information effectively and ability to understand the validity linked to the information. These skills enable library users to make efficient and effective use of information resources.

Faith O. Mesagan *et. al* (2022) Encourages libraries and information professionals to be proactive in the provision of information resource to users while users should also make adequate use of it in their information retrieval. ICT is heavily utilized in the storage processing and dissemination of information. It has made the organization of information very efficient, the delivery of basic information services more effective and the dissemination of information to users easier. The study was carried out to determine the availability and use of ICT resources in academic libraries

Comfort L. I. *et.al* (2023) stated that different types of information resources are available in the library, the extent that availability of information influences the utilization of resources by student is high, also that information resources were accessible by students. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that libraries should market their resources and services to attract users.

It is evident in the literature that were reviewed above that most of the existing literature on the availability, accessibility and utilization of library resources were conducted using university libraries in Nigeria as study's population, extending a similar study to Polytechnic settings will provide a general view about the subject matter, hence, the need for this study.

METHODOLOGY

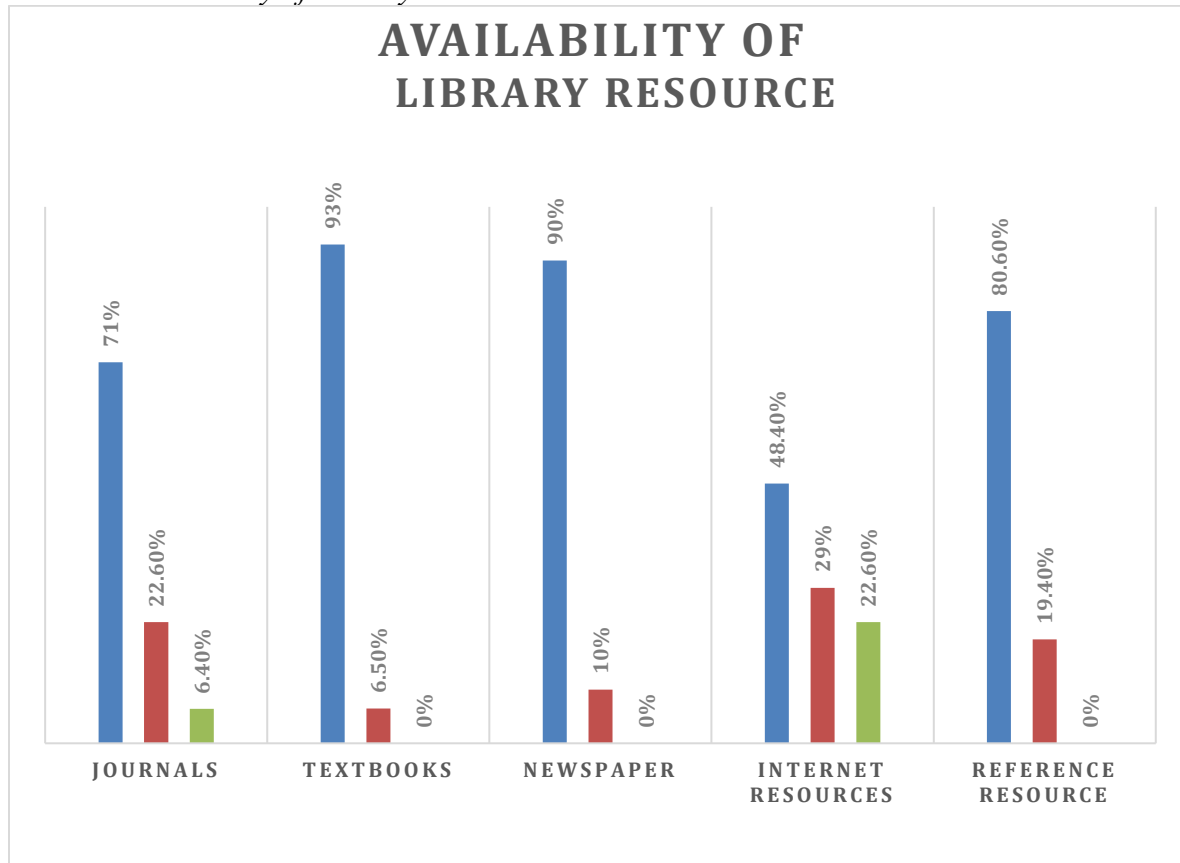
The study adopts a purely quantitative method as a means of data collection. The fact that quantitative method deals with attitude, behaviour and believe of people in real life situations informed the choice of the researcher to adopt this method. The target population were all the 192 registered students of the library. Total enumeration sampling technique was adopted because the population was minimal. Data collected were analysed using simple percentage and frequency counts. Copies of the questionnaire were sent to the respondents via their WhatsApp platforms and e-mails for online completion. One hundred and eighty-nine (189) Out of the 192 copies of questionnaire that were administered to the respondents were filled and returned giving 98% response rate. This is as provided in the Table below;

Table 1: Number of Returned Questionnaire across Departments

Departments	No of registered students	Returned Questionnaire
Science Laboratory Technology	87	85
Computer Science	33	33
Computer Engineering	37	36
Statistic	35	35
Total	192	189

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of availability of information resources in the library and their responses are as presented below;

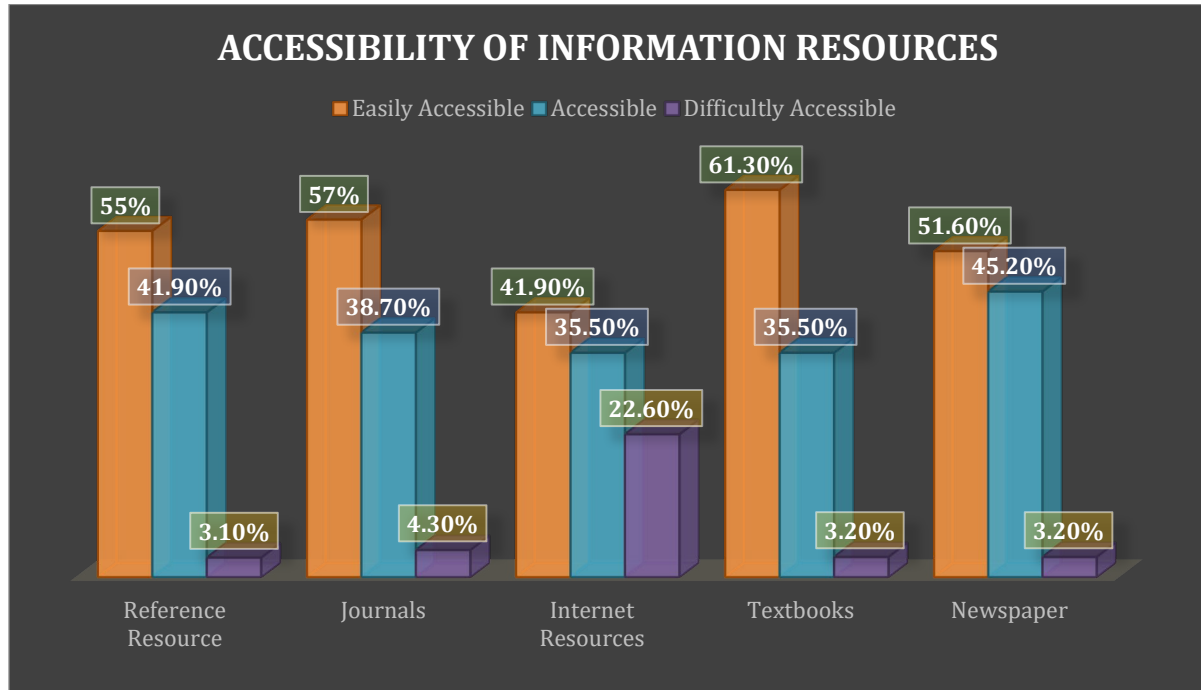
Chart 1: Availability of Library Resources

The chart presented above reveals the availability of library resources as responded by the respondents. Journals, textbooks, newspaper, internet resources, and reference resources were identified as the resources that were made available by the library. Textbooks were found as being mostly and always (93%) available to the library users. This is followed by newspapers (90%), reference resources (80.6%) and journals (71%) were ranked third and fourth respectively. Internet resources (48.40%) were found as being the least available materials in the library. It doesn't come as a surprise that textbooks top the list of the most available materials in the library because the case is almost the same with other academic libraries in Nigeria. Unarguably, academic libraries in Nigeria are struggling to stand shoulder to shoulder with their counterparts in the developed worlds in terms of information technology integration to library services. However, a lot of factors have been identified as stumbling blocks to the initiative. Like, other academic libraries in Nigeria, network glitch is a major detrimental factor that always stand in the way of successful running of electronic libraries at Federal Polytechnic Ayede. Because of this issue, the library management was left with no other option than to invest heavily in the acquisition of printed textbooks and efforts were made to ensure that the materials are made available to the library users. The finding also reveals that textbooks are made available to users more than journals. To the best of understanding of the researcher, the library ensures that journals are made available the same way they acquired textbooks because the respondents identified books as being mostly and always available due to the fact that they are fresh students who do not need journals since they are not to undertake research activities at their level.

Research question 2:

What is the ease of accessibility of information resources to students in the library?

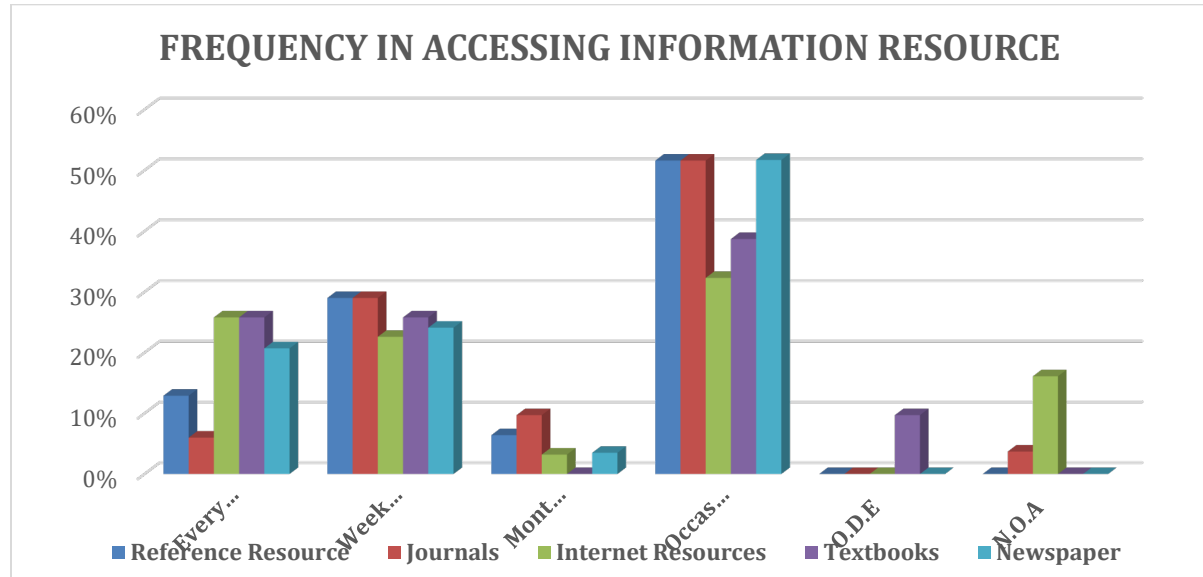
Chart 2: Accessibility of information resource



The above findings show that majority of the respondents found the various resources that are available in the library easily accessible while only a few found them difficult to access. Going by the percentage of students that indicated not to have easy access to the library resources, this study implies that there is inequitable access to the library materials, although at a very low rate. This study suggests that there are barriers that prevent some users from accessing the library materials easily which may be due to the multi-campus nature of the polytechnic.

What is the frequency of use of information resources?

Chart 3: How often do you use the library?



The chart above shows how frequently the student accesses the library. Where as much as 52% of the sample population only access the library occasionally, followed immediately by weekly access of (29%), daily access of (13%), and monthly access of (6%).

From the information presented on Charts 3 & 2, it can be deduced that for the population who visits the library on a daily basis, a good number tends to access both textbooks and internet with the lowest access to journals. On weekly basis, a good number/percentage access both reference resources and journals the most followed by textbooks, then newspaper, the internet being the least in access. Furthermore, on monthly basis most of the populace access more of journals, followed by reference resource, internet and newspaper been the least. In addition, for occasional basis, a high percentage access reference resources, journal and newspaper frequently, with the internet less frequently accessed. During exams virtually all the populace frequently accesses textbooks. Others who can be classified as none of the above (N.O.A) frequently access the internet.

Factors limiting students on the use of information resources in the library?

Table 2: Factors limiting the use of library information resources

S/N	Information Resource	SD	D	A	SA
1	The library opening hour is not appropriate	32.3% (61)	58.1% (110)	9.6% (18)	0% (0)
2	My residence is too far from the library	12.9% (24)	54.8% (104)	25.8% (49)	6.5% (12)

3	The library does not always have what I need	19.4% (37)	71% (134)	4.1% (8)	5.5% (10)
4	Limited availability of requisite materials	19.4% (37)	54.8% (103)	19.4% (37)	6.4% (12)
5	Inadequate reading space and comfortable seat	22.6% (43)	58.1% (110)	12.9% (24)	6.4% (12)
6	Difficulties in retrieving required information	23.3% (44)	70% (132)	6.7% (13)	0% (0)
7	Lack of information technologies	16.1% (30)	54.8% (104)	25.8% (49)	3.3% (6)
8	Poor lightening/ frequent power outage	35.5% (67)	58.1% (110)	2.1% (4)	4.3% (8)

Where: SD; strongly disagree: D; Disagree: A; Agree and SA; strongly agree

From the above table, eight (8) limiting factors were identified to be possible factors that inhibit students' use of the library resources. This includes opening hours, distance from residence, unavailability of needed materials, unavailability of essential materials, inadequate/comfortable reading space, difficulties in retrieving information, insufficient information technology and shortage power supply. From the responds gathered from our respondents, 6.5% strongly agreed on distance from residence, 6.4% on both unavailability of essential materials and inadequate/comfortable reading space, 5.5% on unavailability of needed materials, 4.3% on shortage in power supply, and 3.3% on insufficient information technology.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that Federal Polytechnic, Ayede provides access to a variety of information resources ranges from textbooks, journals, newspapers, reference sources and internet services among others while textbook was identified as the most available information resources at the library, with a significant majority of respondents indicating they have regular access to textbooks. Apart from the aforementioned reason, that was attributed to the dominance of textbooks in the library, it is also worthy of note to understand that the dominance of textbooks in the library under study suggests that the library is fulfilling its traditional role as a repository of academic materials. Textbooks are fundamental resources and the library's ability to provide adequate access to them is highly crucial to the students' academic success.

The implication of this finding on the library under study is that there is need for an on-going assessment and evaluation of the library collections and services with the aim to have a diverse library collection. This approach can also address the issue of unavailability of essential materials identified by the respondents. This above finding is in agreement with the study of Okwu et al (2021) which assert that effective library resources is

paramount at all levels of education so as to ensure that students are suitably armed with the right information at the right time.

This study also identified distance from residence as a barrier to easy access of the library materials, which is the reality of most institutions that run multi-campus programmes like the Federal Polytechnic, Ayede. Federal Polytechnic, Ayede being a new institution is yet to have departmental libraries, thus, students still rely solely on the resources that are made available by the central library. This can be particularly challenging because it creates unequal access to library resources. Undoubtedly, students on the main campus will have more access to the library resources compared to their mates in other campuses. In view of this, there is need to develop strategies to address this barrier. Similar strategies should also be adopted to address some of the issues that were raised by this study. This above finding is in agreement with the study of N.P. Mahwasane and N.P. Mudzielwana (2016) which assert that distance of students' residence from the library could affect their ability of using the library resources.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, we can draw some fair number of conclusions on the challenges of accessibility and utilization of library information resources among the students of Federal Polytechnic Ayede. The result revealed distance from residence as a barrier to easy access of the library materials and unavailability of essential materials as identified by the respondents, which is the reality of most institutions that run multi-campus programmes. Students on the main campus will have more access to the library resources compared to their counterparts in other campuses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were proposed.

- i. There should be institutional commitment to overcome the identified factor militating against the use of library information resources by students in order to remain relevance in today's world of teaching, learning and research.
- ii. The operating hours of the library should be extended in order to enable students who intend to use the library after lecture hours and during examination period have access to the library resources.
- iii. Departmental libraries should be established in order to balance the unequal access to library resources.

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