

# An Assessment of Health Information Seeking Behaviour among Librarians of Two Selected Academic Libraries in Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria

Folorunso Femi Joseph

University Library, University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, Ondo State Nigeria

## Abstract:

**Purpose:** This study is an assessment of health information seeking behaviour among librarians of two selected academic libraries in Ondo city, Ondo State, Nigeria. It focuses on the health information seeking behaviour of Librarians and how Health information timely use could enhance wellness among Librarians of the study population.

**Design/Methodology:** Descriptive survey research design was employed in the conduct of this research. The population was 52 librarian drawn from the two (2) selected tertiary Institutions in Ondo Town, Ondo State, namely; University of Medical Sciences (UNIMED) (University Library), and Adeyemi College of Education Ondo (College Library). Fifty-two (52) copies of Questionnaire were distributed and forty nine (49) returned were found useable for the research, 40 from Adeyemi College of Education and nine from the University of Medical Sciences Libraries. Data gathered were analyzed using tables with frequency and percentage.

**Findings:** It was revealed in this research that Librarians in the academic libraries under assessment sought health information most on Blood pressure control, cancer, food and drugs, Malaria treatment respectively, It was also revealed in the research that respondents relied mostly on Internet, Radio, TV, Books and health journals in meeting their health information needs Librarians should work closely with health care providers in ensuring proper health monitoring and evaluation.

**Implication:** The Research emphasized that there should be positive attitude to timely utilization of health information among Librarians in order to eliminate and or reduce life threatening health problems as this will enhance their job performance and overall wellness

**Originality:** It was recommended for librarians that health related issues should be given priority attention at work. Librarians should also know that productivity at work and general wellness will be challenged if adequate care and attention are not paid to their health. Librarians should be encouraged to regularly go for medical check-up and Librarians should be provided with good working condition, which is generally lacking in many Libraries today.

**Keywords:** Assessment, Health Information, Information Seeking Behaviour, Librarians

**Paper TYPE:** Empirical Research.

## Introduction

Information plays a significant role in our daily professional and personal lives and we are constantly challenged to take charge of the information that we need for work, fun and everyday decisions and tasks (Bruce, 2005).

Information has been described as key to economic and technological advancement to individuals and nations. Aina (2004) defined information as the process of informing and transmitting ideas from a source to a recipient, this information can be used interchangeably as news, facts, data and knowledge and can be accessed by users.

Information seeking is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need (Wright and Guy, 1997). This activity may be actively or passively done when taking steps to satisfy a felt need (Ikoja– Odongo, 2000). The concept of information needs and information seeking has been a major issue of study in academic environment especially in the developing countries. The information needs of individual are enormous and the way they accomplish this is diverse.

Health is wealth, says the common slogan. Healthcare spans across all ages, genders, races, culture and geographical boundaries and is an area of concern to all population. Many countries (especially developing countries) are

plagued with critical healthcare issues such as infectious and/or pandemic diseases, poor basic healthcare programmes and facilities and a shortage of skilled healthcare workers are familiar with many societies today, this is more so because of non-frequency of use of relevant health information and poor attitude to health information utilization in time past.

The concept of “information behavior” was coined in the late 1990s, but it traces its roots to the concept of “information needs and uses” that arose in the 1960s (Khan and Shafique, 2011). In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual Information systems such as a journals or a library, or with computer-based systems such as the World Wide Web (Kari, 2004). Bajpai et al. (2009) enumerates several advantages of e-resources over the print media. These include multi-access, speed, functionality, content, international reach, unlimited capabilities, reduced cost, convenience, searchability and linking. Information seeking behaviour deals with behavior and actions exhibited by human beings in their search for information to satisfy diverse information needs (Abubakar, 2010). Information seeking behavior therefore is the purposive seeking for information by individuals as a consequence of a need to satisfy goals (Kakai et al., 2004; Wilson, 2008).

Roles of librarians in academic enterprise are highly engaging, Librarians are dedicated to maintaining the importance and relevance of the academic library as a place of intellectual stimulation and a center of activity on campuses, more so for the leadership role they play as academic facilities directly hinged to actualization of the vision and mission statements of their Universities. However, it is essential we emphasize information seeking behavior and health information utilization among librarians and the importance of such in performance and productivity and in their quest for balanced living.

### **Statement of Problem**

There is no gain saying the fact that Health is wealth, says the common slogan. Healthcare spans across all ages, genders, races, culture and geographical boundaries and is an area of concern to all population. Preliminary investigation from literature and experience showed that many countries (especially developing countries) are plagued with critical

accessibility to health information, a lack of healthcare issues such as infectious and/or pandemic diseases, poor accessibility to health information, lack of basic healthcare programmes and facilities including shortage of skilled healthcare workers. This is more so because of non-frequency of use of relevant health information among members of our society. Librarians are professionals in information management and dissemination and should be encyclopedic about relevant health information; hence, every librarian should know something about everything. It appears from literature that information seeking behavior and health information utilization among librarians and the importance of such in performance and productivity and in their quest for balanced living has not been subject of enquiry. This provided the motivation for this work.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the health information needs of Librarians in the selected academic Libraries
2. To ascertain the Information Seeking behavior of Librarians in the selected academic Libraries
3. To determine sources through which Librarians seeks health information in selected Academic Libraries?

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the health information needs of Librarians in the selected academic Libraries?
2. What is the Information Seeking behavior of Librarians in the selected academic Libraries?
3. What are the sources through which Librarians seeks health information in selected Academic Libraries?

### **Literature Review**

Information is a major resource that is needed in every sphere of life endeavour especially in health matters (Abubaka, 2010). Health information is a vital resource for individuals who according to BIREME/PAHO/WHO, (2008) seek information for as varying reasons as mere curiosity, self-diagnosis and analyzing and evaluating treatment for health. Admittedly, information that is needed to study changes in health status is either inadequate or unavailable. The quality of the decision made at any given time depends to a large extent on the type of information made available to the user.

Ariyo (1991) opines that information assists in reducing the degree of uncertainty and ignorance in the operating environment, while Corragio (2011) avers that lack of information is the denial of choices and opportunities for living better live. Therefore, the quality of information an individual receives enhances her rightful choice of health care as the case may be. The findings of similar studies by Uchudi, (2001); Robinson's (2010) revealed that women in developing countries are often not allowed to visit health care facilities by themselves.

Uhegbu (2007), describes information seeking behavior as the way users conduct themselves when searching for information. Bartley (2006) agree that information seeking behavior is the way and manner people gather and sought for information for personal use, knowledge updating and development.

According to Wilson(1999,2000), information seeking behavior includes , "those activities a person may engage in when identifying their own needs for information, searching for information in anyway and using / transferring that information. While , Kakai, et.al (2004) defined information seeking behavior as an individual's way and manner of gathering and sourcing for information for personal use , knowledge updating and development.

Information sources include; textbooks, periodicals (journals), reference sources, grey literature, Electronic-resources, among others. Mabawonku (2005) highlights sources in which information can be sought. These include; colleagues, internet, library, friends, family members, recognized institutions, agencies and private organization. Robinson's (2010) research expresses that when seeking information at work, people rely on both other people and information repositories (e.g. document and databases) and spend similar amount of time.

Buchanan, Cunningham, Blandford and Rimmer (2006), conducted a research on information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students in the humanities and observed that a few basic strategies had a common central role in the digital library use of these users. Chaining i.e. (using references at the back of consulted books) was one key strategy that formed the basic approach to finding contemporary academic research literature. The researchers also showed that, the undergraduate students in the humanities using the academic community as a

source of recommendations demonstrated their academic reliance on human resources, particularly when established in their field. They also found that using a mixture of these two approaches formed the common foundations on which their information searching strategies were based.

Information seeking behavior of a user depends on education , access to library and the length of time a user wishes to devote to information seeking, Aina (2004). However, before academic librarians engage in the process of information seeking, there must be an information need he intends to meet and satisfy. Corragio (2011) expresses Information needs, as a state or process started when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution of the problem.

Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo and Kigongo-Bukenya (2004) in their study to determine the search strategies undergraduate students' uses in the process of their search for information concluded that, browsing collections and chaining both indicated a high significance level which shows that browsing collections and chaining were among the undergraduate students' information search strategies. On students' starting techniques Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo and Kigongo-Bukenya(2004) provided options such as using recommended reading list; searching through the subject catalogue; inquiring directly from lecturers; inquiring from colleagues; searching directly on the shelves; searching through e-resources; searching through the journal contents to identify relevant articles, and browsing the Internet. According to the researchers, using lecturers'notes was the only statistically significant starting option used by undergraduate students, whereas searching directly on the shelves, e-resources, journal contents and browsing the Internet were significantly not used by the students as starting point.

Bartley (2006), in his study of information searching activities of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) students, provided participants with instructions, asking them to document their information searching tasks for the period of one week by taking photos or screen shots and notes on what they did, and also with interview carried out with them revealed that browsing collections was one valued means

mentioned by students in the discovering of research materials.

According to the scholar, participants physically browsed library collections nine times during the study week, and this strategy was mentioned as important by the participants. The study also revealed that, of all the tasks performed by the participants (undergraduates), only 32 percent of the methods used revealed that student relied on web-based tools such as Google, Google print, Amazon and Wikipedia for many of their information needs and 39 percent of all tasks in the study involved the use of one or more of these web-based tools (Bartley, 2006).

**Research Methodology**

Descriptive survey research design was employed in this research. The population of the study was drawn from the two (2) selected tertiary Institutions in Ondo Town, Ondo State, namely; University of Medical Sciences (UNIMED) ( University Library) , and Adeyemi College of Education Ondo (College Library) respectively making a total of fifty-two (52).

Data collection instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire. The first section was, to elicit information on the demographic characteristics of respondents. These include; library, educational qualification, gender and age. The second section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit information on information seeking behavior of academic librarians based on the research questions. The third section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit information on health information needs of

academic librarians in the selected institutions in Ondo Town Respectively.

Fifty-two (52) copies of Questionnaire were distributed and forty nine (49) returned were found useable for the research, 40 from Adeyemi College of Education and nine from the University of Medical Sciences Libraries. Data gathered were analyzed using tables with frequency and percentage.

**Analyses of demographic data were presented below;**

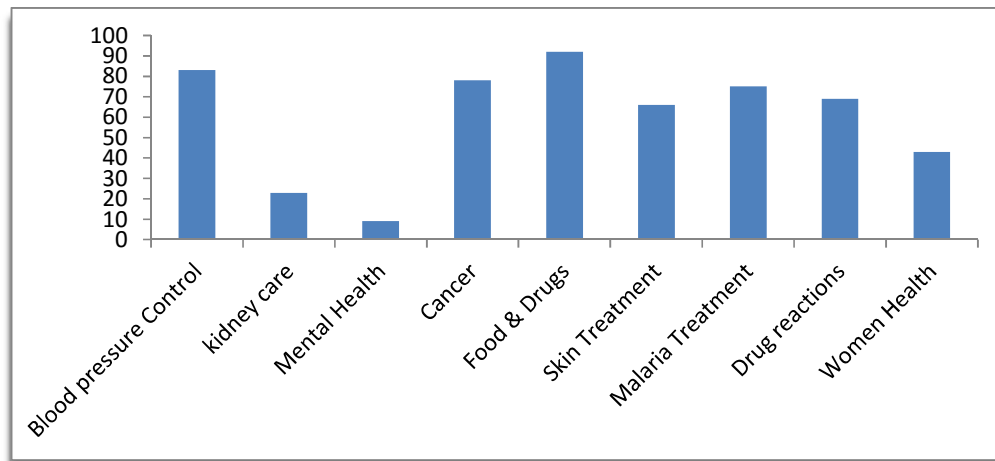
Age demographic data of respondents showed that respondents below 30 years of age were 19.3%, 30-40 years of age were 67.3% while people from age 40-50 were 16.3.

Gender demographic data of respondents revealed that female were 10.2% while male recorded 69.4%.

Marital demographic data of the respondents showed that singles were 18.4%, Married 79.6% and Widowed/Divorced had 02%.

Work experience demographic data of respondents showed that people less than 5years recorded 18.4%, 6-10years in experience recorded 30.6%, whereas 10-15years had 32.7% Highest educational attainment data demographically showed that staffs with diploma in Librarianship were 28.6%, staff with bachelor in Librarianship recorded 36.7%, while staff with Master Degree in Librarianship recorded 32.7% whereas staff with Doctoral Degree in Librarianship were 4.1% respectively.

**Question 1: what are the health information needs of librarians in the selected academic libraries?**



It was gathered from the results of the illustration above that Librarians in the study

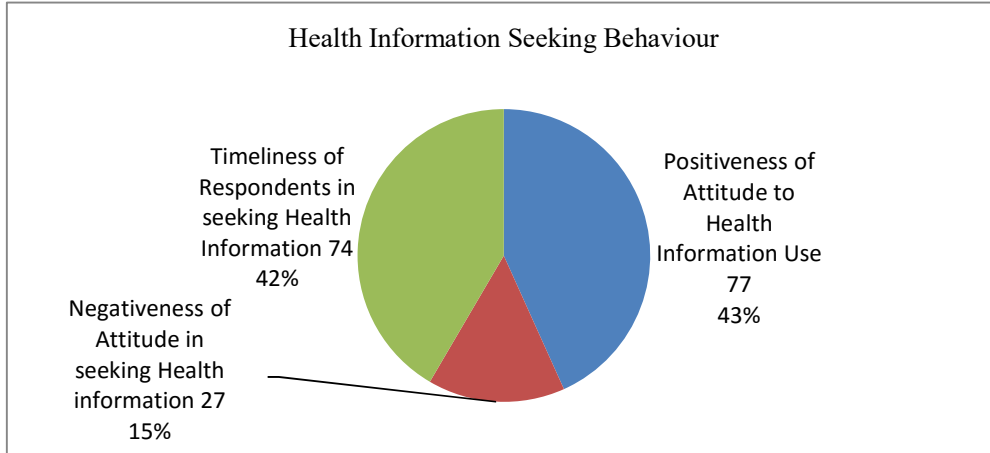
sought after health information on various health issues as thus; blood pressure control

information 82%, kidney care information 22%, mental health information 09%, cancer related information 78%, food and drugs information 91% skin treatment information 66%, malaria treatment, prevention and control information

75%, the implication of this is that among the Librarians studied, Health information was taken serious as the study reflected high percentage in blood pressure control, cancer, food and drug, malaria treatment and control respectively.

**Research Question 2**

**What are the Health information seeking behaviours of librarians in the selected libraries?**

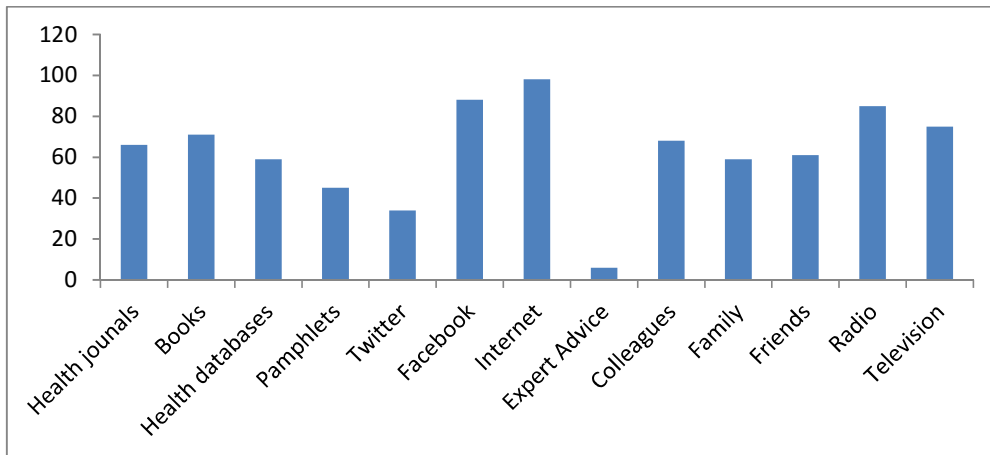


From the above chart, it was evident that respondents placed high premium on health information in order to enjoy balanced health as 42% of respondents indicated strong interest in seeking health information timely. Also, 43% of respondents showed positive attitude to health information use, whereas a low percentage of

respondents (15%) showed negative attitude to health information use. The implication of this result is that librarians in the selected institution sought health information timely with positive attitude and; their tendency of living well is highly likely.

**Research question 3**

**iii. What are the sources through which librarians seek health information?**



From the illustration above, results from the analyzed data from respondents revealed that various sources of information were consulted to sensitize themselves on health-related issues as follows: Health Journals 62%, Books 66%, Health databases 59%, Pamphlet 42%, Twitter 47%, Facebook 07%, Internet 85%, Expert

advice 06%, Colleague 65%, Family 59%, Friends 60%, Radio 98%, TV 77% respectively, it is evident here that the researchers recorded the highest number of responses from Radio, Internet, TV, Colleagues, Health Journals and Books, this was so because of the reliability, up-to-dateness and quality health information sources provided over time.

## Findings and Discussion

In the study of assessment of health information seeking behaviour among librarians of two selected academic libraries in Ondo City, Ondo State (University of Medical Sciences Ondo and Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo State Nigeria respectively). The results revealed that the health information required by librarians in academic libraries studied are; blood pressure control information 82%, food and drugs 91%, cancer information 78%, Malaria treatment 75% and information on drug reactions 68%. This was so because the mortality rates of the mentioned diseases is very high not only in Nigeria but globally, and if proper health awareness campaign is not initiated on time, productivity of Librarians may be threatened in the future.

Another important finding of the research is that internet, Radio, TV, Health journals are the major sources of obtaining health information by the academic librarians in this study. This finding is in conformity with Aina (2004) opinion, that with the advent of the internet, many professionals, researchers, and highly placed individuals now seek a large proportion of their information from the internet. In agreement with this, Abubakar (2010) in their research on information seeking behavior of undergraduates in the humanities in three Universities in Nigeria, discovered a heavily reliance (65.6%) of their respondents on the internet as a source of information. This finding is also in corroboration with Robinson (2010) in his research on the availability, information retrieval skills and use of Electronic resources by information professionals in academic libraries in south Western Nigeria, who discovered from his investigation, that the internet is heavily used by information professionals.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

Health information seeking behavior and health information sources consulted by Librarians in two selected Academic Libraries in Ondo Town were the major focus of this study.

It was revealed in this research that Librarians in the Library studied sought health information most on Blood pressure control, cancer, food and drugs and Malaria treatment.

It was also revealed in the research that respondents relied mostly on Internet, Radio, TV, Books and health journals in meeting their health information needs.

It is a general saying “*health is wealth*”, Librarians should be more health-information conscious as information provider, as information sought on time, leaves their users with better ability for decision making.

Librarians should work closely with health care providers in ensuring proper health monitoring and evaluation

Health related issues should be given priority attention at work

Librarians should know that productivity at work and general wellness will be challenged if adequate care and attention are not paid to health

Librarians should be encouraged to regularly go for medical check-up

Librarians should be provided with good working condition, which is generally lacking in many Libraries today.

## References

- Abubakar AB (2010). A Snapshot of Information-Seeking Behaviour: A Bibliometric Approach. *Library Philosophy and Practice* 2010
- Aina, L.O. (2004). *Library and information science text for Africa Ibadan: third World information*
- Ajiboye, J.O. & Tella, A. (2007). University undergraduate students' information seeking Behavior: Implications for quality higher education in Africa. *The Turkish online. Journal of educational technology* 6 (4), 4052. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/information\\_seeking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/information_seeking)
- Ariyo, A. (1991). Management Information system for dynamic growth. *Management in Nigeria* 7, 16-18
- Bajpai RP, Mal Bidjut K, Bajpai G (2009). Use of e-resources through consortia: A Boon to Users of Indian University Libraries. (CAL 2009) *Library Services*. Available at [http://crl.du.ac.in/ical09/papers/index\\_files/ical-85\\_83\\_195\\_2\\_RV.pdf](http://crl.du.ac.in/ical09/papers/index_files/ical-85_83_195_2_RV.pdf), Accessed on 15/11/2017
- Bartley, M. 2006. User needs assessment of information seeking activities of MIT (Massachusetts Institution of Technology) students – spring 2006. [Online]. <http://macfadden.mit.edu/webgroup/userneeds-report.pdf>. (Accessed July 10, 20017).
- BIREME/PAHO/WHO (2008). Access to Health Information and Knowledge Sharing – an Overview. available at from <http://e-health.org/articles.html> accessed on 30th Dec.2017

- Bruce H (2005). Personal, anticipated information need. *Inform. Res.*10: (3).  
[p://www.worlib.org/vol14no1/kakai\\_v14n1.shtml](http://www.worlib.org/vol14no1/kakai_v14n1.shtml). Accessed March, 2018
- Buchanan, G., Cunningham, S.J., Blandford, and Rimmer, J. 2006. Information seeking by Humanities scholars.[Online].[warwick/articles/ECDL2.doc](http://warwick/articles/ECDL2.doc). (Accessed 10 July 2017).
- Corragio, F. (2011). Information needs of women in developing countries. Accessed at <http://www.slideshare.net/fcorragio> on 8th November, 2012.
- Ikoja-Odongo, R. (2000). A study of the needs and uses of the informal Sector of Uganda. University of Ululand, South Africa (unpublished PhD thesis).
- Kakai M, Ikoja–Odongo R, Kigongo–Bukonya IMN (2004). A study of the information Seeking behavior of undergraduate students of Makerere University, Uganda World Libraries,
- Kari J (2004). "Web information seeking by pages: an observational study of moving and Stopping" *Information Research*, 9(4) paper 183 [Available at <http://InformationR.net/ir/9-4/paper183.html>]. Accessed on November 10, 2017. on: November 9, 2012
- Khan SA, Shafique F (2011). "Information Needs and Information-Seeking Behavior: A Survey of College Faculty at Bahawalpur". *Library Philosophy and Practice*. Paper 484. Available at: 14(1). Available at
- Mabawonku, I. (2005). The information needs of artisans: case study of Artisans in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Lagos Journal of library and information Science* 3(1):61-76
- Robinson, M.A. (2000). An empirical analysis of engineers', information behaviors, *Journal of the American society for information science and technology*. 61(4) 640658. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002.asi.21290>. accessed on February 12, 2018
- Uchudi, J.M. (2001). Covariates of child mortality in Mali: Does the health seeking. Behaviour of De mother matter. *Journal of Bio- Science*, 33, 33-54
- Uhegbu, A.H. (2007). *The information user: Issues and themes*. : Okigwe Whytem Publishers
- Wilson, T.D (1999). Models in information behavior research. *Journal of documentation*.55(3): 249-270.
- Wilson T.D. (2000). Recent trends in user studies: Action research and qualitative methods. 23rd March, 2018
- Wright, M. & Guy, L. (1997). "Where do I find it and what do I do with it: Practical problem–solving in the data library," Available at: [http://dphs.dacc.wisc.edu/types/data\\_reference.html](http://dphs.dacc.wisc.edu/types/data_reference.html), accessed on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018