



EXTENT OF USER'S PATRONAGE IN SOME SELECTED UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH- SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

Purpose- The study aimed to investigate the extent of users' patronage in some selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

Design methodology/approach- The study adopted a descriptive survey method. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consists of 113 librarians in all the federal universities libraries in South- South Nigeria. A total of 113 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 91 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics: mean scores and percentages. The mean score of 2.5 and above, and percentage score of 50% were considered as acceptable.

Findings- The study shows that user's patronage in the libraries under study is low; the effects of non-patronage by library users are failure, demotion, and poor academic performance. The problems associated with users' non patronage of the university libraries are social media, unfriendly librarians, obsolete materials and lack of infrastructure facilities.

Practical implications- The important finding in this study is that academic libraries are the most relevant institution to support the school curriculum, to support the research of the university faculty and students. Therefore, the provision of current materials, infrastructures and state of the art facilities is critical to library users' patronage of the university libraries under review.

Originality value- This seems to be the first study of its kind to explore the extent of user's patronage in some selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Keynote: University libraries, Library users, Library patronage

Introduction

The university library is the foundation of any good education, as well as a repository of information and knowledge. Also the university library is the back bone of every sound education and also regarded as the store house of information and knowledge. Library users should have access to the library in order to solve their problems. They also need to acquire information in order to expand their knowledge and also to do their assignments, research and preparation for their examination. A good university library has been noted as essential ingredient for research, successful teaching and learning to library users who patronized the library for their academic growth (Banting 2008).

The user of a library should be able to access the library's services and resources on a regular basis, as this will assist the library to achieve its aims and objectives. (Eze, 2011). As a result,

library users are extremely important to the library's services. Any attempt by the librarian to disregard the satisfaction of the library users will be done with the library's permission (Okolo, 2002). The library should provide education materials to users in order to equip them with sufficient knowledge. The purpose of any library, according to Hameed (2004), is to provide users with access to available resources and to optimize their use. This implies that achieving a high level of library patronage by users is accomplished by the provision of efficient and effective library services.

In recent years, particularly in university libraries, it has been found that library patronage is quite low. Users' patronage of Nigerian academic libraries was studied by Nse and Okorafor (2011) at two universities: Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO) and Evan Enwerem University, Owerri (EEU). The

survey highlighted three primary issues that prevented full patronage: a lack of current information content, a library setting that is not conducive to usage, and poor reading accommodations. In addition, Kumburu (2011) mentioned the arrival of social media as a crucial cause in library patronage and also lack of interest among many students nowadays. The researcher argues that students prefer to search for information on the internet rather than in books. They find it difficult to always patronize the library unless during exam periods because Facebook, Whatsapp, and other such services take up their time. Social media is the most recent technological breakthrough in the information age. It is a social networking site that focuses on developing, strengthening, and reflecting on social interactions among people who have a shared interest, purpose, or activity. One of the influencing variables of library patronage, according to Ajidahn (2004), is technical improvement. It is in light of this, that this topic the extent of user's patronage in selected university libraries in Nigeria is imperative.

Statement of the problem

Library is an agency which engages in collection, processing, preserving and disseminating of recorded information in various formats most convenient to its target users. Library resources are resources housed by a library which enable the library to meet its goals and objectives of its establishment. Libraries are charged with the responsibility of satisfying the varying needs of its users especially students who are using information resources like books, journals and other non-book related materials both in print and electronic formats. For this to be actualized, the users have to patronize the library. It has been observed that there are literatures on user's patronage in university libraries, but it seems that no work has been done on the extent of user's patronage in selected university libraries in Nigeria. It is as a result of this seemingly gap that prompted the researcher to embark on this work to unravel the extent of users' patronage in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. To what extent does users patronized the university libraries in South-South Nigeria?
- ii. What are the effects of user's non-patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria?
- iii. What are the problems associated with users' low patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria?
- iv. What are the strategies to curb the problems associated with users' low patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Literature Review

University libraries play an important role in knowledge development and serve a diverse range of users. The university library, according to Lesikar and Petit (2017), is a logical place to start an orderly search for secondary information when undertaking research. This raises concerns about educational institutions that lack this critical resource (the library). Libraries are designed to be used. This supports the library's substantial investment in human and material resources, as well as organizational structures and procedures. Okolo, (2002) defined library use as the act of examining the library stock, seeking and receiving assistance from library employees, locating information, and borrowing a book from the library. It also entails going to the library to study one's own material because the library can stand alone; but the university cannot, the university library is therefore regarded as the heart of the university.

The three major infrastructures of universities are laboratories, teachers/classrooms, and libraries, which include a diverse range of information resources, as well as equipment to support teaching, learning, and research (Ajibero, 2004). Olanokun and Salisu (2013) defined the library as the nerve center of an educational institution, a location where information is offered to assist all clients regardless of their ages, political and ethical backgrounds, religion, sex, and other factors. It

can be observed that universities cannot fulfill their duty without a library that is appropriately equipped with printed resources, information and communication technology resources, and related facilities, as well as skilled employees and a high level of services to users that will meet their information demands.

According to Ogunmedede and Emeahara (2010), no matter how huge a library's stock is, if its services and resources are not effectively utilized, the library will become a white elephant project. This emphasizes the importance of adequate planning, facility design, and library policy and program adoption in order to ensure proper and effective library use. While various user studies have revealed poor library usage among academic library users (Subair, 2013 and Odu, 2016), research such as (Yusuf and Iwu, 2010; Adeyemi, 2017) have revealed that there are seasonal periods when library use is at its height. This generally happens during exams. Identifying the services that library patrons use during this time will shed light on our mission. Also, according to Odine (2011) and Nwaohiri and Emezie (2012), the poor patronage of university libraries is due to the expansion of alternative information providers who provide and create information resources and services that meet the information needs of users. These information providers have taken a step further by empowering users to navigate the information landscape on their own. Even as libraries have ramped up their offerings by providing digital information resources and services, the fight to retain users has never been as severe as it has been in this decade.

Despite the availability of these digital information resources and services, library patronage at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria is declining (Mohammed, 2017). The university spends its shrinking budget on database subscriptions and the purchase of both print and electronic materials, but to no purpose. The number of users has continued to decline. Users' patronage increases at various points of the semester, according to studies by Yusuf and Iwu (2010) and Adeyemi (2017). In order to improve, the Library can identify the exact services that are required by users' during this time period. Ogbuiyi and Okpe (2013) analyzed

the use of library materials and services in four private universities in south west Nigeria: the degree of library patronage was determined at Babcock University, Covenant University, Lead City University, and Redeemer University. The data for this study was gathered using a questionnaire, which was distributed to 255 registered users of the four universities' libraries, with 200 questionnaires completed and returned. The responders were chosen at random among individuals who were visiting the library at the time. The patronage of the four libraries was found to be below average, according to the survey.

Mohammed (2017), also urged that libraries re-design their services, as most research reveal that library use is dropping nowadays. Users should be more mindful and aware of the library's feelings so that they are not disappointed after visiting and using the library; they are more likely to return if they are satisfied with the library's resources. Users satisfaction, according to Mohammed, is defined as the amount to which a library user's information needs are met by the library's offered services and information resources. Another issue according to Odine (2011) is the nature of the interaction between the librarian and the users. Users frequently claim that certain librarians are unfriendly or overly rigorous in their treatment of their clients, among other things. However, you can hear from the librarians themselves that the users are not respectful, among other things.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The total population of the study was made up of 113 librarians from the six federal universities in South –South Nigeria as shown in the table below. A total of 113 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 91 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics precisely mean scores and percentages. The mean score of 2.5 and above and percentage score of 50% were considered as acceptable by the respondents while below 2.5 mean score below 50% score is considered as not acceptable by the respondents.

Table 1: The Distribution of the Population of the Study

S/N	Name of the Library	Librarians
1	University of Benin Library(UNIBEN)	20
2	University of Calabar Library(UNICAL)	18
3	Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun Library (FUPRE)	9
4	University of PorthHarcourt Library (UNIPOINT)	25
5	University of Uyo Library (UNI-UYO)	28
6	Federal University of Otuoke Library	13
Total		113

Source: This information was gotten from the establishment units of the university under study through personal contact in 2021/2022 academic session.

As shown in the table 1 above, the populations of this study consist of 113 recruited librarians in the federal university libraries under study. The breakdown of the number of librarian's in the federal university libraries in South South Nigeria is as follows: University of Benin library (20); University of Calabar library (18); Federal

University of Petroleum Resources Effurun Library (9), University of Port Harcourt Library (25); University of Uyo (28); and Federal University Otuoke Library (13) respectively.

Research Question 1: To what extent does users patronized the libraries in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: The Extent of Users Patronize the Library in Selected University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	NE	-X	Decision
1	Frequently	12	15	52	12	2.4	Rejected
2	Once in a while	30	45	16	0	3.1	Accepted
3	During Exams	33	37	21	0	3.1	Accepted
4	Twice a week	10	15	40	26	2.0	Rejected

The table 2 revealed four (4) identified items on the extent of user's patronage in the university libraries under study. They are: frequently (2.4), once in a while(3.1), during exams (3.1) and twice a week (2.0) respectively. From the table above, one can infer that library users do not patronized the libraries frequently for their

academic pursuit, rather they visits the library once in a while and also during exams. One can therefore generalize that user's patronage in the libraries under study is low.

Research Question 2What are the effects of user's non-patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: The Effects of User's Low patronage of the University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Poor performance	45	25	21	0	3.2	Accepted
2	Failure	43	25	20	3	3.1	Accepted
3	Demotion	42	25	19	5	3.1	Accepted
4	Reduction in academic advancement	44	32	15	0	3.3	Accepted

Table 3 identified four (4) items oneffects of user's low-patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria to be poor performance (3.2), failure (3.1), demotion (3.1) and reduction in academic advancement (3.3) respectively.

Research Question 3What are the problems associated with users' non patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria

Table 4: The problems associated with Users Low Patronage of the University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Availability of the internet	55	35	9	1	3.4	Accepted
2	Unfriendly librarians	43	34	11	3	3.2	Accepted
3	Obsolete materials	43	35	9	4	3.2	Accepted
4	Lack of infrastructure facilities	44	38	8	1	3.3	Accepted

Table 4 also identified four (4) items on the problems associated with users' low patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria to be availability of the internet (3.4), unfriendly librarians (3.2), obsolete materials (3.2) and lack of infrastructure facilities respectively.

Research Question 4 What are the strategies to curb the problems associated with users' non patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 5: The strategies of Curbing the Problems associated with Users low Patronage of the University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Orientation on reading culture	34	40	14	3	3.1	Accepted
2	Librarians should be friendly to users	36	41	10	4	3.1	Accepted
3	Acquisition of current materials	42	20	23	6	3.0	Accepted
4	State of the art facilities	34	29	16	12	2,6	Accepted

Table 5 also identified four (4) items on the strategies to curb the problems associated with users' low patronage of the university libraries in South-South Nigeria to be orientation on reading culture (3.1), librarians should be friendly to users (3.1), acquisition of current materials (3.0) and state of the arts facilities (2.6).

3. Acquisition of current library materials is critical to learning, research and reading. Well stocked library with current materials will enhanced patronage by users
4. Also, state of the art facilities will also encourage users to patronage the library.

Conclusion

Library users should see the reason to patronize the library on a regular basis because of their various academic pursuits and achievements. The dream of every librarian is to satisfy their users. Library services should be planned to cater for the present, future needs, demands and expectations of the users. Librarians should also be friendly to these users by counseling them on the importance of the library. Finally, state of the art facilities should also be acquired to encourage library users to patronize the library regularly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings for this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. There is the need for the orientation of reading culture by librarians in the university libraries so as to encourage library users to patronage it.
2. Librarians should try as much as possible to render effective service to library users, one way of doing this is to encourage and counsel them whenever they come to use the libraries, and this will therefore enhanced their patronage

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