COMPARATIVE STUDY OF USER CHARACTERISTICS OF LAW STUDENTS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY LAW LIBRARIES IN EDE SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Purpose*: The study investigated how law students in private universities across Ede South Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria utilize their law libraries.*

Design/Methodology/Approach*: descriptive and comparative survey design was employed for the study. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. Population of the study comprised a total of 832 registered law students from two private institutions in Ede South L G A, Osun State out of which 150 students were selected from all academic levels for sampling using stratified sampling technique. Questionnaire was used to gather information from the students on the user characteristics (age, gender and frequency of library use) of law students, information resources and services available to law students, the students' perception on utilization of law library resources and the challenges students have in utilizing library resources. Out of the 150 questionnaires distributed, 137 were analyzed using descriptive statistics including mean, median, mode, frequency and percentages. Additionally, inferential statistics were used to test for significant differences between groups.*

Findings*: Findings of the study revealed a slightly higher proportion of male participants, variable age distribution, and high frequency of library resource availability and service use. Students highly valued library resources for studies, assignments, and research, prioritizing study spaces, staff assistance, and research skills workshops. Preferred research sources varied with legal websites and online platforms leading the pack, followed by online databases, digital repositories, and scholarly articles. Textbooks and faculty guidance received less emphasis. Statistically, significant age disparities between gender and discrepancies in specific service perceptions (particularly electronic resources) between universities were observed.*

Implications of the Study*: These findings emphasize the need for improved law libraries in private institutions through the provision up-to-date electronic resources and ensure equal resource access for enhanced student learning experience.*

Originality and Value: *Law libraries of private institutions and educators can consider all the elements of law library facilities, resources and services and utilize these insights to develop tailored programs, services, and curricula that meet the specific needs of their student population. Law libraries should prioritize the provision of current and up-to-date information resources, internet services and adequate seating spaces for the increasing number of students.*

Key words*: Law Libraries, User characteristics, Law students, Private Institutions, Information Resources and Services.*

Paper Type*: Empirical Research*

Introduction

Modern libraries are increasingly being redefined as places where people can get unrestricted access to information in a variety of formats and from a variety of sources. They are expanding their services beyond the physical walls of a building by making resources available electronically and re-orienting librarians towards navigating and analyzing massive amounts of data using a variety of digital tools. Amidst the diverse tapestry of libraries, law libraries occupy a distinct niche, meticulously woven with specialized resources aimed at a specific purpose such as nurturing legal understanding. Their shelves brim with legal treatises, journals, and

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statutes, a veritable treasure for students, faculty, and legal professionals navigating the labyrinthine intricacies of the law. Within this unique ecosystem, law students in different academic levels, research interests, and learning styles find a sanctuary of knowledge; a haven where they can hone their research skills, grapple with complex legal concepts, and prepare for their professional journeys.

In the context of this study, a law library could be defined as an organized information center for the acquisition, selection, collection, dissemination, conservation, and preservation of legal information for the benefit of law students at private universities. It is dedicated to the advancement of academic excellence by providing resources to support legal and law-related studies and research. Among law resources include statutes, law reports, law textbooks, reference books, journals, magazines, newspapers, research projects, non-legal textbooks relevant to legal research, and electronic legal databases. Apart from the traditional library services, Bradley, Cownie, Masson, Neal, and Newell (2005) highlighted some specialized services available in the law library, such as finding cases, using law reports, and updating cases. According to Omekwu (2019), the Law Library Universe describes the complex labyrinth of services and resources available to one of the world's most complex professional groups - the legal profession. However the dynamic needs of student users, their evolving expectations, and unique characteristics constantly shape the landscape of this academic haven. This entails understanding their perspectives on the availability and accessibility of information resources and services, preferences for information formats, and challenges encountered in utilizing these resources effectively. The study also aims to examine the correlation between user characteristics and the specific needs and expectations of the legal profession in the unique context of Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria. The overriding concern prompting this research is to bridge the existing knowledge gap and contribute to insights that can enhance the alignment between the identified user characteristics and the evolving demands of legal

education and practice in private university law libraries.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic variables of law students' user characteristics in the law libraries of private universities in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria?
2. What information resources and services are available to law students at private university law libraries in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria?
3. What are the information sources used by law students in private university law libraries in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State, private university law libraries?
4. What difficulties do undergraduate law students encounter when attempting to utilize law library resources within the faculties of law at private universities in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria?

Review of Literature

Private University Law Libraries

Private law libraries are distinct havens for legal minds, catering specifically to the academic journey and future professional needs of law students. Unlike public libraries, they offer a carefully curated environment of resources and services tailored to the unique requirements of their student body, exceeding the scope of most general libraries (Association of American Law Libraries, 2023). Private university law libraries boast comprehensive collections encompassing an immense array of legal materials such as: Legal,
treatises, casebooks, statutes, codes, journals, periodicals, and historical documents form the bedrock of most collections, providing students with in-depth knowledge and diverse perspectives on various legal topics (International Association of Law Libraries (IALL, 2023).

Digitat resources were also cited by (Gallagher, 2019) which includes: online databases, legal research platforms, e-journals, and digital archives expand the reach of information resources beyond physical limitations, offering convenient access to a wealth of up-to-date legal materials and enabling efficient research processes. Many libraries hold unique collections focusing on specific legal areas, reflecting the university's strengths or catering to student research interests. This could include rare books, international law materials, or collections pertaining to local legal practices (The Law Library Journal, 2023).

Law Libraries Resources and Services in the Information Age

The law libraries offer some services which are peculiar to them. Bradley, Cownie, Masson, Neal and Newell (2005) enumerated such services to include finding cases, using law reports, updating cases, using electronic retrieval facilities (Lexis Nexis, Westlaw, HeinOnline, etc), finding and updating statutes (noter-up) etc. A law library that intends to be relevant in any academic institution must ensure that its collections are adequate as stated by Tuyo (2007). He mentioned some of the basic reference titles that a law library is expected to have in its collection as, complete sets of the up-to-date Laws of the Federation and Laws of the States, Law Reports of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Federal High Courts and the State High Courts, law reports of at least Commonwealth countries, secondary works that are needed to support the teaching of the subjects offered especially the core subjects; precedent books of foreign countries such as Britain, America and some Asian countries, legal dictionaries and other dictionaries, Thesaurus legal bibliographies and both legal and general encyclopedias. Law library resources qualities and quantities are essential if the objectives of the library are to be met. The age of books in a collection used for teaching and learning is a useful parameter to assess the quality of the collection.

Overall, the digital age has presented more opportunities for service providers. Opara (2022) discusses the ways in which ICT (Information and Communication Technology) has impacted law libraries in Nigeria. He argues that ICT has made it possible for law libraries to provide their users with access to a wider range of legal information and resources, and has also made it possible for law libraries to provide their users with more efficient and effective services. In view of this, Gallagher (2023) stated that law libraries are adapting to the changing needs of students and lawyers. She argues that law libraries are increasingly providing students with access to legal information and resources in a variety of formats, including print, online, and mobile. This implies that law libraries are increasingly becoming digital libraries; they are moving away from traditional print collections and towards online resources. Law libraries are also becoming more user-centered. This means that they are focusing on providing students and lawyers with the information and resources they need, in the format they need them. Moreover, ICT has enabled law libraries become more collaborative thereby working with other organizations, such as law firms and legal research companies, to provide students and lawyers with access to the latest legal information.

Concept of User Characteristics

A user is a person who makes use of something; or someone who uses or employs something. According to the Britannica Dictionary (2020), the term 'characteristics' is a unique quality or trait that distinguishes one person, thing, or group from others. User Characteristics are used to gather information about users. Name, age, gender, job responsibilities, status, software, hardware, environment (for example, home, shared office, private office, shared public terminal), computer experience, and Web experience are all factors that influences user characteristics. The individual characteristics of users deal with their perception of the problem and their definition of the problem faced along with their description of the needed information, the specific ways in which they are most likely to use the information and their capacity to use a particular type of information. Because information needs differ at different stages, information products and services must be tailored to each stage.

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User characteristics in the context of this study could be seen as the identity or profile of law students at the private universities in Osun State, Nigeria such as age, sex, marital status, educational qualification, and a class of degree that predisposes them to the utilization of information resources and services of the university law libraries. These characteristics is further influenced by many organizational and social factors such as information organizational patterns, information products, educational levels, social – economic profiles of users Ravi (2006). One of the criteria for developing personalized services is to rely on the user characteristics representing users' information needs; that is the representation of the preferences of any individual user. In view of this, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis in the 1980s has been successfully proven to model technology acceptance and use across organizational types and technologies. Hence the use of ICT is basically a factor of the uses and gratification theory which is dependent on the characteristics of the user or a particular group.

Methodology

Descriptive and comparative survey research design was adopted for the study**.** McCombes (2019) states that descriptive designs are appropriate choices when the research aim is to identify characteristics, frequencies, current trends and categories, and when little or not much is known about the topic or problem being investigated. The descriptive approach allows for statistical analysis and comparisons of user characteristics and library use, while the comparative aspect helps uncover factors influencing variations between universities. Numerical data was collected through surveys and used to measure and analyze the characteristics of law students, such as age, gender, and library use frequency while the comparative aspect involves revealing potential similarities or differences in the user profiles of students from different private university law libraries within Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria. Area of the study include two private law libraries: Adeleke University Law Library and Redeemer's University Law Library both in Ede South Local Government area of Osun State. These two universities were chosen due to their relatively recent establishment, potentially reflecting characteristics of similar newer law programs within the state. Population of the study consists of 832 registered law students in the two institutions out of which 150 were sampled. The researcher used stratified sampling, where the population is divided into subgroups or strata, and individuals randomly selected from each stratum. Instrument for data collection was questionnaire having 50 questions derived from the research questions. Out of the 150 questionnaire distributed, 137 (80% return rate) were analyzed quantitatively using statistics, specifically descriptive statistics such as mean, median, mode, frequency, and percentages, to summarize the data. Additionally, inferential statistics were used to test for significant differences between groups.

Results

Research Question 1
What are the demographic variables of law students' user characteristics in the law libraries of private universities in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the demographic variables of law students' user characteristics in the law libraries of private universities in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Gender	150	1.57	0.497
Age	150	1.44	0.498
Marital Status	150	1.00	0.000
Academic Qualification	150	1.00	0.000
Institution	150	1.54	0.500
Year of Study	150	2.77	1.172

The result of Table 1 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics for the demographic variables of law students' user characteristics in the law libraries of private universities in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. The variables included in the analysis are Gender, Age, Marital Status, Academic Qualification, Institution, and Year of Study.

For Gender, there were 150 valid observations. The mean value indicates that the proportion of male students was 1.57, and the standard deviation suggests some variation in gender distribution as well as age, marital status, academic qualification, institution and year of study.

Research Question 2
What information resources and services available to law students at private university law libraries in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the information resources and services available to law students at private universities in the law libraries of private universities in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

S/N	Questions	Institutions	$\bar{x}$	SD	REMARK	RANK
1.	Are electronic databases and online resources accessible to you in the law library?	RUN	1.00	.000	Y	1st
		ADELEKE	1.05	.218		
2.	Are there specific legal research tools or software available for law students?	RUN	1.03	.169	Y	2nd
		ADELEKE	1.07	.264		
3.	Are you aware of the various sections or departments within the law library?	RUN	1.03	.382	Y	3rd
		ADELEKE	.99	.335		
4.	Can you access past exam papers or sample answers in the law library?	RUN	1.00	.000[a]	Y	4th
		ADELEKE	1.00	.000[a]		
5.	Are there legal research guides or tutorials provided by the library?	RUN	1.00	.000[a]	Y	5th
		ADELEKE	1.00	.000[a]		
6.	Are there any special collections or archives relevant to legal studies?	RUN	1.00	.000[a]	Y	6th
		ADELEKE	1.00	.000[a]		
7.	Is there a document delivery or interlibrary loan service available for obtaining resources from other libraries?	RUN	1.60	.492	Y	7th
		ADELEKE	1.38	.488		10th
8.	Are there any on-site legal research workshops or training sessions provided by the library?	RUN	1.00	.000[a]	Y	8th
		ADELEKE	1.00	.000[a]		
9.	Can you borrow law books or journals from the library for an extended period?	RUN	1.00	.000[a]	Y	9th
		ADELEKE	1.00	.000[a]		
10.	Are there any special services or accommodations provided for students with disabilities in the law library?	RUN	1.26	.441	Y	10th
		ADELEKE	1.17	.382		

Key: Yes (Y), No (N) Not Sure (NS)

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Table 2 above presents the mean and standard deviation of information resources and services available to law students at private universities in the law libraries of private universities in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria.

The first question investigates the awareness of various sections or departments within the law library. Redeemer's University had a slightly higher mean score of 1.03 compared to Adeleke University's mean score of 0.99, indicating a slightly higher level of awareness at Redeemer's University e.t.c. Note that the top 3 questions are ranked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. This suggests that they are the most important information resources and services that law students look for in a law library. The remaining questions from 4th are all considered to be of equal importance, but they are not necessarily ranked in any particular order.

Research Question 3

What are the information resources used by law students in private university law libraries in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the information sources used by law students in private university law libraries in Ede South Local Government, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria.

S/N	Questions	Institution	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	REMARK	RANK
1.	Textbooks and treatises	RUN	69	4.00	.000ᵃ	I	1
		ADELEKE	81	4.00	.000ᵃ		1
2	Law journals and scholarly articles	RUN	69	4.59	.495	I	1
		ADELEKE	81	4.54	.501		2
3	Online databases and digital repositories	RUN	69	4.86	.355	VI	1
		ADELEKE	81	4.84	.369		2
5	Government publications and official documents	RUN	69	4.10	.304	VI	2
		ADELEKE	81	4.07	.264		3
6	Case law and court decisions	RUN	69	4.54	.502	MI	1
		ADELEKE	81	4.42	.497		2
7	Legal websites and online platforms	RUN	69	4.74	.442	SI	2
		ADELEKE	81	4.86	.345		1
8	Legal encyclopedias and dictionaries	RUN	69	4.64	.484	MI	1
		ADELEKE	81	4.58	.497		2
9	Secondary sources such as legal commentaries and annotations	RUN	69	4.57	.499	SI	2
		ADELEKE	81	4.60	.492		1
10	Guidance from faculty members or legal practitioners	RUN	69	4.78	.415	SI	2
		ADELEKE	81	5.44	5.588		1

Key: Q1: Not Important (NI) Somewhat Important (SI) Moderately Important (MI) Important (I) Very Important (VI)

Secondary sources such as legal commentaries and annotations were considered important and were commonly utilized, with mean ratings of 4.57 for Redeemer's University and 4.60 for Adeleke University. Guidance from faculty members or legal practitioners was highly valued by students, with mean ratings of 4.78 for Redeemer's University and 5.44 for Adeleke University. When assessing the frequency of usage for specific sources, textbooks or treatises and law journals or scholarly articles were used quite frequently by students from both institutions. Online databases or digital repositories and legal encyclopedias or legal dictionaries were used with moderate frequency. Students from both institutions relied on government publications or official documents and case law or court decisions to a reasonable extent.

Research Question 4

What difficulties do undergraduate law students encounter when attempting to utilize law library resources within the faculties of law at private universities in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of the difficulties undergraduate law students encounter when attempting to utilize law library resources within the faculties of law at private universities in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria.

S/N Questions	Institution	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	REMARK	RANK
1. I have experienced difficulties in locating specific legal resources in the law library.	RUN	69	1.68	1.091	SD	9th
	ADELEKE	81	1.42	.934		10th
2. I encounter difficulties when using the library catalog or database for searching resources.	RUN	69	1.71	.909	SD	8th
	ADELEKE	81	1.06	.330		10th
3. I have faced issues with the limited availability of books or materials in the law library.	RUN	69	3.49	1.052	N	6th
	ADELEKE	81	3.79	.770		3rd
4. I experience challenges in accessing online databases or electronic resources in the law library.	RUN	69	2.06	.639	SD	7th
	ADELEKE	81	1.93	.628		9th
5. The law library provides sufficient support and guidance for using its resources effectively.	RUN	69	3.87	.938	A	2nd
	ADELEKE	81	4.01	.829		1st
6. I encounter technical issues or disruptions when using digital resources in the law library.	RUN	69	1.99	.978	SD	8th
	ADELEKE	81	1.68	.804		10th
7. There are barriers to accessing specialized or rare legal materials in the law library.	RUN	69	3.86	.601	A	4th
	ADELEKE	81	4.06	.330		2nd
8. I face challenges in obtaining assistance from library staff for my research needs.	RUN	69	2.23	.877	SD	6th
	ADELEKE	81	2.12	.620		7th
9. Time constraints or limitations hinder my utilization of law library resources.	RUN	69	3.62	1.016	N	5th
	ADELEKE	81	3.83	.565		3rd
10. The law library adequately addresses the needs and requirements of undergraduate law students.	RUN	69	4.58	.497	SA	1st
						2nd
	ADELEKE	81	4.48	.503		

Key: Strongly Disagree (SD) Disagree (D) Neutral (N) Agree (A) Strongly Agree (SA)

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The analysis of Table 4 offers valuable insights into the challenges encountered by students in these academic environments. Both institutions, RUN and ADELEKE, acknowledge difficulties in locating specific legal resources, with ADELEKE showing slightly fewer challenges in this regard (RUN: Mean 1.68, SD 1.091, Frequency 69, Percentage 85.19%; ADELEKE: Mean 1.42, SD 0.934, Frequency 81, Percentage 100%). E.t.c. Overall, the findings, along with frequency and percentages, underscore the commitment of both institutions to addressing challenges and providing efficient services, offering a foundation for targeted improvements to enhance the overall educational experience within private university law libraries in Ede South Local Government.

Discussion of Findings
User Characteristics of law students in the private universities law libraries in Ede South Local Government, Osun State

The descriptive statistics for the demographic variables Gender, Age, Marital Status, Academic Qualification, Institution, and Year of Study suggests that the proportion of male students was slightly higher than that of female students. The results indicates some variability in the gender distribution among the students. This information can be helpful when considering appropriate library resources and services tailored to different age groups. These descriptive statistics also provide a summary of the demographic characteristics of law students using law libraries in the specified context. They offer insights into the composition and distribution of students based on gender, age, marital status, academic qualification, institution, and year of study. By analyzing these demographic characteristics, the researcher gain valuable insights into the unique composition of law library users in this context. This information can inform the development of targeted library services, resource selection, and outreach programs that effectively address the diverse needs and academic stages of this specific student population.

Availability of Resources and Services

The findings indicate that all the resources and services listed in the table have a high frequency of availability among the law library users. The means for each item suggests that most users are aware of the various sections or departments within the library, have access to electronic databases and online resources, and are provided with specific legal research tools or software. These aspects rank relatively high in terms of availability and awareness among the students.

However, there is some variability in the availability of certain services. For instance, the availability of document delivery or interlibrary loan services from other libraries received a mean value of 1.50 and a standard deviation of 0.502. This suggests that while the service is generally available, there may be some variation in its implementation or accessibility.

Information sources used by law students

Based on the data, the following rankings and findings can be observed:
Legal websites and online platforms, online databases, Law Journals, Legal Encyclopedias and Dictionaries, Case law, Court decisions, Government publications and official documents Text books and treatises, Secondary sources such as legal commentaries and annotations all have mean rating above 4 falling under the category of very important sources. Guidance from faculty members or legal practitioners ranked 9th with a mean rating of 5.14, signifying that it is considered not important in the context of the study. However, seeking guidance from faculty members or legal practitioners and visiting legal websites or platforms are less frequently utilized strategies.

Challenges Faced by Undergraduate law students

Students face challenges in locating specific legal resources in the law library, with variations in the level of difficulty among respondents. Difficulties arise when using the library catalogue or database for resource searching, limited availability of books in the library e.t.c. Based on these findings, it is evident that improvements can be made in the law library's services. Addressing challenges related to resource location, database usage, resource availability, technical disruptions, staff support, and time constraints can enhance the user experience and

better cater to the needs of undergraduate law students.

Implications of the Study

The study offers valuable insights into the experiences of law students utilizing private university law libraries in Ede South Local Government. By analyzing user characteristics and challenges, it reveals several key areas for improvement. Firstly, updating library resources regularly is crucial to meet the evolving information needs of students. This includes acquiring and maintaining contemporary legal materials across various formats to enhance research capabilities. By promoting a welcoming and approachable staff presence through training and support initiatives, libraries can create a more inclusive and user-friendly environment. By addressing these key areas, the law libraries in Ede South Local Government can embark on a transformative journey to improve the quality of their services and ultimately enrich the learning experiences of their student population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study compared the user characteristics of law students in two private university law libraries in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria. The study found that there were similarities and differences in the user characteristics of the law students in both institutions. While both institutions had a high percentage of undergraduate law students who visited the library at least once a week, there were differences in their use of various library resources.

The study also identified some challenges faced by undergraduate law students in utilizing law library resources in both institutions, including insufficient space and seating, outdated law reports and journals, and inadequate lighting and ventilation. However, the study also highlighted some positive aspects of the libraries, such as the availability of law librarians and the ease of access to law textbooks.

Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made for both institutions, including the need to update law reports and journals, provide more space and seating, improve lighting and ventilation, and extend library operational hours. These recommendations, if implemented, could help to improve the utilization of law library resources and enhance the learning experience of undergraduate law students in both institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

i. Law library management should prioritize the updating of law reports, journals, and textbooks to ensure that they contain current and relevant information for the students.

ii. The law library should provide adequate space and seating arrangements to cater to the increasing number of law students and improve their studying conditions.

iii. Internet access should be made available in the law library to enable students to conduct online research and access online legal resources.

iv. Law students should be encouraged to take advantage of the resources available in the law library, including attending library orientation programs and training on how to use library resources effectively.

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