



AWARENESS AND UTILISATION OF REFERENCE MATERIALS AND SERVICES AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

A functional reference section with relevant information resources provision remains an asset to the library and its parent institution. In spite of numerous benefits associated with reference materials and services, many academic libraries in South-west Nigeria still lack functional reference sections. Even in universities with good reference section and services, majority of the undergraduates are not aware of the existence of such units and services while very many cannot fully exploit the reference sources to fulfil their information needs. This study thus examined the level of awareness and utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in four public universities in South-west, Nigeria. The descriptive research design of ex-post-factor type was used. A sample of 400 out of 20,698 registered undergraduate library users in the selected universities constituted the respondents for the study. A validated questionnaire with Cronbach-Alpha 0.89 was used for data collection. Out of 400 copies of questionnaire administered, only 284 copies were found usable, which gave 71.0% rate of return. Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that dictionaries, bibliographies, handbook, and encyclopaedia were the most available reference materials. Studies also revealed high level of awareness and utilisation of reference materials and services among the undergraduates. More so, it was discovered that lack of access to



internet facility within the library, obsolete reference materials among others were factors hindering the utilization of reference materials and services. Findings further indicated that awareness of reference materials and services relatively and significantly influence utilization of reference materials and services among undergraduates. It is therefore recommended amongst others that universities library should concentrate more on purchase of reference materials such as index, abstract, handbook, encyclopaedia, dictionaries and lay more emphasis on services like Library instructions and literature search. University libraries should also make provision for 24- hour Internet facilities free for undergraduates amongst others.

Keywords: Reference materials, Reference services, Awareness, Academic libraries, Utilisation

Introduction

All over the world, libraries in general, and most especially academic libraries were established to serve parent institutions whose mission include teaching, learning, research, and community services. Libraries are, therefore, not just establish for the purpose of selection, acquisition, and organisation of information resources (print, non-print and web based) but also dissemination of such information to end users. For university libraries to function effectively in supporting the teaching, learning, and research activities of parent institutions, there is the need to have different divisions and sections in the library to provide various services in order to accommodate various needs of patrons. In this regard, any standard university library is expected to have departments such as collection development (acquisition and gift & exchange), technical services, serials, readers' services, multimedia, bindery, and reference services in order to anticipate for and meet the need of the library patrons. Reference and information services thus occupy central position in the practice of librarianship (Abdulah & Mamsa, 2014). Ogunniyi, Efosa, and Sheji (2013) emphasised that the reference section of any library is an important area where resources and services are being showcased and marketed to the community at large. This is the reason library personnel in reference sections are regarded as image-maker of libraries.

The mission and goals of academic institutions can partly be achieved through provisions of effective and efficient reference materials and services of libraries (Otonekwu, Oyedokun, Komolafe & Adewara, 2019). This is because reference services of libraries serve to educate and assist patrons in sourcing for accurate reference information that are needed for teaching, learning and research without much delay (Quadri & Abiodun, 2017; IFLA, 2019). Reference materials always contain relevant, genuine, accurate, authentic, and reliable information compared to other library materials (Makinde, Aba & Ugah, 2017). Specifically, reference materials are library information materials irrespective formats that can be used to provide relevant answers to queries and different information needs of library patrons (Aboyade & Aboyade, 2017; Okeke, Oghenetga & Nwabu, 2013). Ogbuiyi (2015) considered reference materials as any kind of publication from which authoritative, reliable, and trustworthy information can be obtained. These materials include encyclopaedia, dictionaries, directories, abstract and indexes, handbooks, manuals, biographies, bibliographies, atlases & maps, catalogue records and the likes.

On the other hand, reference services are conceptualised as direct and indirect assistance rendered by reference librarian and library personnel to library patron seeking for any kind of meaningful information for personal consumption (Qobose & Mologanyi, 2015). Similarly, Awodoyin and Aina (2018) defined reference services as precise services personalised towards the information



needs of each library user thereby providing individual library user a sense of belonging in the library. Reference services are also regarded as seen as the personal assistance rendered by the reference librarian to library users in pursuit of information (Ogunniyi et al 2013; Otonekwu et al, 2019). Okeke et al (2013) referred to reference services as ongoing processes that involve assisting people in filling gaps in knowledge and solving problems. In essence, it is considered as the process of assisting library patrons to solve desired information needs and problems. Thus, Tofi, Agada and Okafor (2020) indicated that the benefit of reference resources and services is that it provides personalized assistance to library users in accessing suitable information resources to meet their needs.

Reference sources by virtue of their characteristics are kept in the reference section of the libraries for reference purposes only and not to be borrowed. In academic libraries, reference sources are also available to assist academic staff and students in their teaching, learning and research processes. According to Elmer Ramuson and Biosciences Libraries (2009), reference sources such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, almanacs, atlases and so on serve as research tools that assist in writing research papers and projects. These materials also provide answers to specific questions such as brief facts, statistics and technical instructions, background information, or direct users to additional sources. In making sure that users are aware and effectively utilize reference materials, reference librarians and other personnel assigned to reference section are expected to maintain sound and current reference collections. The personnel also are expected to assist library users with information searches and train them in reference and citation techniques. Such personnel must have good customer service and rational skills. He/she must play the role of dynamic guide, leading users on journeys to knowledge and information seeking and must be friendly to assess patrons' needs and find the best path for patron to take.

In spite of the importance associated with reference materials coupled with the huge cost of purchase and the amount of time and effort required in delivering qualitative reference services, most library patrons still do not make adequate use of these resources and services (Achebe, 2012). Okorafor, Ariole and Anyalebechi (2017) attributed poor use of reference collections and services to poor or low level of awareness about the existence and poor knowledge about the importance of the collections to users. Okeke et al (2013) identified obsolescence and irrelevancy of the reference collections in meeting information demands of patron. In the same vein, Onifade and Sowole (2011) concluded that most library patrons are ignorant of the fact that reference materials and services are readily available for their consumption.

Empirically, Iroaganachi and Ilogho (2011) investigated usage of reference books among final-year students at Covenant University, Nigeria and discovered that poor level of utilisation of the library's reference book among the final year students. This was attributed to preference for online resources over print resources. One might probably link this to the belief of the present manners of university students that all manners of information were available on the internet and therefore no need visiting or using libraries. Onifade et al (2011) examined awareness and perception of reference services by undergraduates of University of Agriculture Abeokuta. Findings reported that reference material and services were available for usage among undergraduates. Findings further showed that encyclopedias, dictionaries are the most useful reference materials among undergraduates.

Okeke, et al (2013) examined students' attitude towards the use of reference and information services in academic libraries in Nigeria and reported low level of utilisation of reference materials among the students. The low level of utilisation reported was attributed to obsolete reference materials and inexperienced staff in the reference section of the library. Oguniye et al (2013) investigated reference sources and services use among students of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that the students demonstrated high level of knowledge and utilization of what reference materials and services are all about. Nevertheless, it was observed that obsolete



materials, and time wastage when searching for materials among others were some of the challenges confronting the students in the use of reference materials and services.

Doo and Aliyu (2015) assessed public library patron's utilisation of reference resources and services in Benue State, Nigeria. The result of the descriptive statistics revealed that the library users made use of reference materials to a high extent for courses and research work. The respondents signified high level of satisfaction with the services provided to them by the library. Ademodi (2015) examined level of awareness and utilisation of reference sources among students in Adekunle Ajasin University Library, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. The author concluded that the high level of awareness positively influenced the level of utilisation of the library reference materials. Ogbuiyi (2015) assessed the availability and use of reference sources and services among undergraduates in Babcock University. The author reported that dictionaries, encyclopaedia, indexes and abstract, yearbook amongst other were available for usage among undergraduates. Findings further report high level of utilization of reference sources and services among undergraduates.

Okorafor et al. (2017) assessed knowledge and use of reference and information services among library users in university libraries in two states in Nigeria. The study revealed that the undergraduates exhibited high levels of knowledge of and utilisation of reference and information services. Findings further indicated that non-participation of students in orientation programmes, inadequacy of reference information sources, lack of space/location of reference unit and poor communication skills of library staff constituted challenges to the undergraduates' level of awareness and utilisation of reference and information services. Makinde et al (2017) investigated references resources accessibility and utilisation among fisheries undergraduates in university libraries in North-Central, Nigeria and discovered low level of utilisation of reference material among undergraduates. Inadequate trained reference staff, obsolete reference materials and time spent in the library searching for relevant reference materials constituted major challenges towards utilisation of reference materials and services. Similarly, Oriogu, Chukwuemeka and Oriogu-Ogunbiyi assessed faculty awareness, perception and use of information resources and services in a private university in Nigeria and reported a higher degree of awareness and utilisation among the respondents

In another vein, Otonekwu et al (2019) evaluated usage of reference sources and services among students of Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, Nigeria and revealed high level of utilisation of reference sources and services. Findings also revealed that dictionaries, bibliographies, yearbooks, handbooks, geographical sources, biographical sources, index and abstracts, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, reprographic services are the major reference sources and services available to the students. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents do not have access to bibliographies, manuals, handbooks, encyclopedias, and directories. Findings further revealed that inadequate and obsolete reference materials, lack of reference librarian, poor infrastructural facilities, and absent of internet facilities amongst others constituted challenges to students while seeking reference sources. Tofi et al (2020) assessed digital reference resources and services utilisation among postgraduates in Benue State University, Nigeria and reported low level of utilisation of digital reference services in the state university libraries.

Scholars like Onifade et al. (2011), Ogunniyi et al. (2013), Abdulah et al. (2014), Ademodi (2015), Okorafor et al. (2017), Quadri et al (2017), Oriogu et al. (2018), Otonekwu et al. (2019), Tofi et al. (2020) amongst others have conducted studies relating to awareness and utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates. However, there has been unclear evidence on the real causes of low level of students' awareness of reference information resources in the library and reason for low level of utilization of reference materials and services were not well articulated. In addition, some of the previous studies were limited only to one institution (Onifade & Sowole, 2011; Quadri & Abiodun, 2017; Tofi et al, 2020). Similarly, studies that made use of more than one or two institutions



considered only state or federal university in Nigeria separately (Okorafor, Ariole & Anyalebechi, 2017; Awodoyin & Aina, 2018). This, therefore, suggests paucity of literature in the South-west Nigeria considering both State and Federal university together. It is based on the above that this study was carried out to examine the awareness and utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria.

To justify the need for further procurement and acquisition of more reference materials required to assist students in performing well academically, there is the need for an improved level of awareness among undergraduates towards effective utilisation of reference materials and services. This study is significant at this time because the outcome will inform the undergraduates in Nigeria tertiary institutions and other library patrons about reference materials and their importance/contribution to present and future information. It will equally help students to be more informed and aware of the available reference materials and services in their institution library at any point in time. To reference librarian and other library personnel, this study will serve as an eye opener for them to be aware of the reference material and services most important to library patrons for future budgeting and procurement. To the university management, this study will expose some factors affecting the utilisation of reference materials and services in order for them to come to the aid of the library through fund support in addressing those challenges.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to assess the level of awareness and utilization of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- i. examine the type of reference materials available for use by undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria;
- ii. investigate the level of awareness of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria;
- iii. assess the level of utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria;
- iv. establish the relative influence of level of awareness of reference materials and services on utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria; and
- v. identify the factors hindering the utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design of ex-post-facto because the variables of interest have already occurred. The study only assessed and identified the variables and there was no manipulation of any kind while inferences were made. The target populations were the registered undergraduate library users in four selected public universities in South-west, Nigeria. The total population of registered users across the four universities was 20, 698 for 100 level – 500 level undergraduates (as at the time the survey was conducted). A two-stage-sampling technique was adopted for the study. For ease of sampling and conveniences and to get accurate and valid response, 100 registered but regular library users (100 level – 500 Level) were purposively selected from the respective university libraries. A self-developed questionnaire titled "Awareness and Utilisation of Reference Information Resources and Services Questionnaire" (AURIRSQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections and has forty-six (46) items in all.

The questionnaire was given to 3 experts; 2 experts from the Department of Science and Technology Education, Olabisi Onabanjo University and 1 Senior Librarian from Olabisi Onabanjo



University, to ascertain its face validity. The comments and suggestions of the experts were included in the design of the instrument. The instrument was then trial-tested on 30 registered undergraduate library users (100 Level – 500 Level) of University of Ibadan, Oyo State to ascertain its content validity. A Cronbach Alpha 0.89 was obtained with the test. The value showed that the instrument was highly reliable, and it was administered to the respondents. One hundred (100) copies each, making four hundred (400) questionnaires was given to one Library staff from each of the four universities who assisted in conducting the questionnaire on the registered regular library undergraduate users. This took a period of 3 -4 weeks depending on each university. A total of 284 copies of the instrument were retrieved which gave 71. 0% return rate. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics such as tables, frequency counts, percentages, and inferential statistics (regression analysis).

Results

This sub-section presents the results of the data analysis in accordance with the objectives of the present study to make a valid conclusion for generalized purposes.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N=284)

Parameter	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	124	43.7
Female	160	56.3
Total	284	100.0
Level		
100	24	8.5
200	79	27.8
300	99	34.9
400	74	26.1
500	8	2.8
Total	284	100.0

Table 1 presents the distribution of the respondents by demographic information in terms of gender and level of study. It is apparent that most of the undergraduates were female by gender as indicated by 56.3%. Many of the students (34.9 %) were in 300 level, followed by 200 level students (27.8 %), 400 level students (26.1 %), while the least was 500 level (2.8 %).

Objective 1: To examine the type of reference materials available for use among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria



Table 2: Respondents' perceptions of types of reference materials available for use

S/N	Reference materials	Available	Not Available	Don't Know	Remark
1	Encyclopaedia	184 (64.8%)	30 (10.6%)	70 (24.6%)	Available
2	Dictionaries	216 (76.1%)	37 (13.0%)	31 (10.9%)	Available
3	Directories	145 (51.1%)	94 (33.1%)	45 (15.8%)	Available
4	Bibliographies	200 (70.4%)	58 (20.4%)	26 (9.2%)	Available
5	Atlases	148 (52.1%)	37 (13.0%)	99 (34.9%)	Available
6	Glossaries	23 (8.1%)	30 (10.6%)	231 (81.3%)	Not Available
7	Indexes and Abstracts	166 (58.5%)	58 (20.4%)	60 (21.1%)	Available
8	Handbook	185 (65.1%)	52 (18.3%)	47 (16.5%)	Available
9	Documentation List	12 (4.2%)	163 (57.4%)	109 (38.4%)	Not Available
10	Who's Who	143 (50.4%)	64 (22.5%)	77 (27.1%)	Available
11	Almanacs	104 (36.6%)	112 (39.4%)	68 (23.9%)	Not Available
12	Calendars	159 (56.0%)	53 (18.7%)	72 (25.4%)	Available

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics showing the type of reference materials available for use by undergraduates in public universities in South-west Nigeria. Findings revealed that dictionaries, bibliographies, handbook, and encyclopaedia were the most available reference materials while documentation list and almanac were identified by undergraduates in public universities in South-west Nigeria as not available for usage.

Objective 2: Identify the level of awareness of reference materials and services among



undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria

Table 3: Respondents’ level of awareness of reference materials and services

S/N	I am aware that:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
Reference Materials							
1	Encyclopedias, Atlases, Dictionaries, Handbooks, Indexes are example of reference materials	171 (60.2%)	97 (34.2%)	9 (3.2%)	7 (2.5%)	3.52	.68
2	Reference materials cannot be borrowed but can only be consulted within the library	119 (41.9%)	113 (39.8%)	37 (13.0%)	15 (5.3%)	3.18	.85
3	Reference books are kept differently from other information materials	135 (47.5%)	82 (28.9%)	45 (15.8%)	22 (7.7%)	3.16	.96
4	Reference materials provide genuine, accurate, authentic, and more reliable information needed for users compared to other non-reference materials	124 (43.7%)	86 (30.3%)	60 (21.1%)	14 (4.9%)	3.13	.91
5	Reference materials is meant for consultation when users need specific information	104 (36.6%)	93 (32.7%)	79 (27.8%)	8 (2.8%)	3.03	.87
6	Reference materials is not meant for continuous reading	78 (27.5%)	130 (45.8%)	67 (23.6%)	9 (3.2%)	2.98	.79
Criteria Mean = 2.50							
Average Mean = 3.17							
Reference Services							
1	Reference letter issued to students is a reference service provided in the library	121 (42.6%)	120 (42.3%)	29 (10.2%)	14 (4.9%)	3.23	.82
2	Patron assistance is a reference services provided within the library	110 (38.7%)	124 (43.7%)	35 (12.3%)	15 (5.3%)	3.16	.84
3	Information in reference collections are organized	113	105	51	15	3.11	.88



	in alphabetical order	(39.8%)	(37.0%)	(18.0%)	(5.3%)		
4	Literature search is one of the reference services provided within the library	35 (12.3%)	39 (13.7%)	124 (43.7%)	86 (30.3%)	2.08	.96
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Criteria Mean = 2.50							
Grand Mean = 2.90							
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Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics showing the level of awareness of reference materials and services among undergraduates. According to results presented in table 3, it can be generalized that the undergraduates in the public university in South-west, Nigeria, possessed high level of awareness of reference materials and services (Mean = 3.17 and 2.90) respectively. Nevertheless, in terms of reference materials, level of awareness was highest on encyclopedias, atlases, dictionaries, handbooks, indexes (Mean = 3.52), followed by reference materials cannot be borrowed but can only be consulted within the library (Mean = 3.18), and by reference books are kept differently from other information materials (Mean = 3.16). On the other hand, reference materials were lowest on reference materials is meant for consultation when users need specific information (Mean = 3.03), followed by reference materials is not meant for continuous reading (Mean = 2.98). For references services, level of awareness was highest on reference letter issued to students is a reference service provided in the library (Mean = 3.23), followed by Patron assistance is a reference services provided within the library (Mean = 3.16)

Objective 3: Assess the level of utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria

Table 4: Respondents' level of utilisation of reference materials and services

S/N	I make use of:	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Mean	SD
Reference Materials							
1	Indexes	167 (58.8%)	80 (28.2%)	28 (9.9%)	9 (3.2%)	3.43	.79
2	Abstracts	140 (58.8%)	87 (28.2%)	23 (9.9%)	14 (3.2%)	3.33	.80
3	Handbook	123 (43.3%)	109 (38.4%)	44 (15.5%)	8 (2.8%)	3.22	.81
4	Encyclopedia	108 (38.0%)	134 (47.2%)	35 (12.3%)	7 (2.5%)	3.21	.75
5	Dictionaries	120 (42.3%)	97 (34.2%)	45 (15.8%)	22 (7.7%)	3.11	.94



6	Bibliographies	76 (26.8%)	117 (41.2%)	49 (17.3%)	42 (14.8%)	2.80	.99
7	Documentation List	57 (20.1%)	73 (25.7%)	74 (26.1%)	80 (28.2%)	2.38	1.09
8	Directories	48 (16.9%)	56 (19.7%)	91 (32.0%)	89 (31.3%)	2.22	1.07
9	Atlases	28 (9.9%)	37 (13.0%)	141 (49.6%)	78 (27.5%)	2.05	.89
10	Glossaries	20 (7.0%)	19 (6.7%)	147 (51.8%)	98 (34.5%)	1.86	.82
11	Who's Who	14 (4.9%)	37 (13.0%)	109 (38.4%)	124 (43.7%)	1.79	.85
12	Almanacs	7 (2.5%)	23 (8.1%)	127 (44.7%)	127 (44.7%)	1.68	.73
13	Calendars	15 (5.3%)	11 (3.9%)	76 (26.8%)	182 (64.1%)	1.50	.80

Criteria Mean = 2.50

Average Mean = 2.51

Reference Services

1	Library Instruction	112 (39.4%)	125 (44.0%)	28 (9.9%)	19(6.7%)	3.16	.86
2	Photocopying	90 (31.7%)	113 (39.8%)	52 (18.3%)	29 (10.3%)	2.93	.95
3	Literature Search	100 (35.2%)	77 (27.1%)	69 (24.3%)	38 (13.4%)	2.84	1.05
4	Selective Dissemination of Information	6 (2.1%)	88 (31.0%)	147 (51.8%)	43 (15.1%)	2.20	.71

Criteria Mean = 2.50

Grand Mean = 2.78

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics showing level of utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates. From the statistic shown in table 4, index was ranked highest in

terms of utilisation of reference materials (Mean = 3.43), followed by abstract (Mean = 3.33), followed by Handbook (Mean = 3.22), followed by Encyclopedia (Mean = 3.21). The lowest ranked were “Who’s who” (Mean = 1.79), “Almanac” (Mean = 1.68), and “calendar” (Mean = 1.50). Similarly, in terms of reference services, library instruction (Mean = 3.16) and photocopy were ranked highest while selective dissemination of information was ranked lowest (Mean = 2.20). In conclusion, the table above indicated that the undergraduates in South-west had high level of utilisation of reference materials and high level of utilisation of reference services.

Objective 4: Identify factors hindering the utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria

Table 5: Factors hindering the utilisation of reference materials among the respondents

S/N	Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
1	Lack of access to internet facility within the library	159 (56.0%)	66 (23.2%)	37 (13.0%)	22 (7.7%)	3.27	.96
2	Obsolete reference materials	89 (31.3%)	129 (45.4%)	44 (15.5%)	22 (7.7%)	3.00	.88
3	Lack of awareness of the importance of reference materials	83 (29.2%)	114 (40.1%)	64 (22.5%)	23 (8.1%)	2.90	.91
4	Inadequate reference materials	68 (23.9%)	137 (48.2%)	50 (17.6%)	29 (10.2%)	2.86	.90
5	Incompetent library personnel	69 (24.3%)	62 (21.8%)	112 (39.4%)	41 (14.4%)	2.56	1.01
6	Unconducive environment	42 (14.8%)	92 (32.4%)	83 (29.2%)	67 (23.6%)	2.40	1.00
7	Inadequate literature search/poor searching skills among students	45 (15.8%)	43 (15.1%)	116 (40.8%)	80 (28.2%)	2.19	1.01
8	Lack of students' attendance/participation during orientation programme	36 (12.7%)	43 (15.1%)	133 (46.8%)	72 (25.4%)	2.15	.94

On the factors hindering the utilisation of reference materials among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria as presented in Table 5, it can be deduced that lack of adequate knowledge and importance of reference materials, obsolete reference materials, lack of access to internet facility within the library, inadequate reference materials and incompetent library personnel



were perceived by the students as factors hindering their level of utilization of reference materials. On the other hand, factors like unconducive environment, lack of students' attendance/ participation during orientation programme and inadequate literature search/poor searching skills among students were not being perceived as factors hindering undergraduates' level of utilization of reference materials.

Objective 5: To establish the relative influence of the awareness of reference materials and services on utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria

Table 6: Regression analysis on influence of awareness of reference materials on the level of utilisation of reference materials

Model	Coefficients ^a			T	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	32.635	1.932		16.895	.000
Awareness	.254	.063	.234	4.036	.000

R = .234; Adj R² = .0555; Adj R² = .051; F = 16.287; P < .05

a. Dependent Variable: Utilisation of reference materials

Results in Table 6 indicated that awareness of reference materials and services is a potent contributor to utilisation of reference materials among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria ($\beta = 0.254$; $t = 4.036$; $p < .05$). Nevertheless, the result of the F-value of 16.287 whose probability close to zero percent showed that awareness of reference materials and services had a significant influence on utilisation of reference materials among undergraduates. Thus, there is a significant relative influence of the awareness of reference material on the level of utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in South-west, Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings of this study in line with the objective one indicated that dictionaries bibliographies, handbook, encyclopaedia and index and abstract were the most available reference materials as indicated by the undergraduates in public universities in South-west Nigeria. The findings were in line with that of Elmer et al (2009); Onifade et al (2013), Ogbuyi (2015) and Otonekwu et al (2019) who earlier mentioned that reference materials such as encyclopaedia, dictionaries, directories, atlases, handbook/manuals, indexes amongst others were available for students to use in academic libraries in Nigeria.

In line with the objective two, it was reported that undergraduates in the public university in South-west Nigeria have a high level of awareness of reference materials and services. The reports agreed with that of Ademodi (2015) which reported high level of awareness of reference materials and services among library users. In terms of the level of utilization of reference materials and services among undergraduates, findings indicated that undergraduates in public universities in South-west Nigeria possessed a high level of utilization of reference materials. These were in consonance with the findings of Otonekwu et al (2019) which reported high level of utilization of reference materials among undergraduates. In support of the above, Okorafor et al (2017) also reported a high level of



utilization of reference materials among undergraduates. Similarly, the findings corroborate that of Doo et al (2015), Ogunniyi et al (2013), Ademodi (2015), Oriogu et al (2018) among others, which also reported high level of utilization of reference resources and services among patrons in public libraries in Nigeria. Findings of the present study thus negate that of Iraogananchi et al (2011), Okeke et al (2013), Makinde et al (2017); Quadri and Abiodun (2017), Tofi et al (2020) among others, which reported low level of utilization of reference materials.

The result of objective four indicated that lack of access to internet facility within the library, obsolete reference materials, lack of awareness of the importance of reference materials and inadequate reference materials were among the leading factors hindering the awareness and utilization of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public universities in South-west, Nigeria. As presented in Table 5. Finding of this study is in line with the findings of Otonekwu et. al (2019). According to the authors, inadequate reference materials, obsolete state of library materials among others were factors identified. Findings also corroborate with that of Okeke et al (2013) which established that stocked obsolete materials and inexperienced staff in reference section of the library were factors that affect the awareness and utilization of reference materials and services.

Based on objective five, it was gathered that there is a significant influence of the awareness of reference materials and services on utilization of reference materials and services among undergraduates. This showed that what one is not aware of cannot be utilized. The findings corroborate with that of Okorafor et al (2017). According to the authors, utilization of reference materials and services within the library environment depend on a lot of factors and of which student's level of awareness take paramount position. Equally, findings were in line with that of Ademodi (2015) which found that the level of awareness of reference materials and services among undergraduates influences their level of utilization of reference materials and services.

Conclusion

A major conclusion drawn from the study was that one can observed a wide range of difference in the mean level of awareness and that of utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in public university in South-west Nigeria as presented in table 3 & 4. The reason for this could be attributed to the belief of this generation of students that we are in the world of information explosion, coupled with the internet and an abundance of media technology that has made information resources more readily available anywhere, anytime, anyhow. According to their belief, such has made it easier and faster for undergraduates to search for, access, retrieve, use, and share information needed for academic and other purposes without necessarily visiting the library.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that:

- i. Reference Librarian in conjunction with library management should ensure that intensive sensitisation of undergraduates about reference materials and services are carried out to adequately inform the students about reference materials and services available for them.
- ii. Orientation should be a routine programme in the university environment; and should be make compulsory to all freshers and stale-lite undergraduates. This aspect of the library services should be handled by experienced librarian probably the senior cadre librarian who had gotten enough experience to tutor the students more on libraries related issues as apply to their information need.
- iii. Since we are in 21st century, driven by information and communication technology, it is expected that academic libraries of nowadays should be 24-hour Internet ready and besides, library resources including references materials and services should be made available at the library portal where students can have access to reference information needed and services at any given



time.

- iv. Reference collections in Nigerian academic library should be updated from time to time. In this scenario, old references collections should be replaced and archived in case of any future need.
- v. Since indexes, abstract, handbook, encyclopaedia and dictionaries among others were the most utilised reference materials among undergraduates, it is recommended that academic libraries in South–west Nigeria should spend more of their fund in expanding these collections compared to reference materials with low level of utilisation among students.
- vi. Reference librarians and other supporting staff (para-professionals) should also rise to their responsibilities in guiding the users to source for information required as well as provided guidance in the provision of all necessary reference materials and services promptly.



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