

The use of Academic Library and Information Seeking Behaviour of Students at LIUTEBM University

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at assessing the use of academic library and information seeking behaviour of nursing and clinical medicine first year students at LIUTEBM University. The objectives of the study were to determine how often nursing and clinical medicine first year students used the library, to ascertain the purpose for which nursing and clinical medicine first year students used the library, to explore the extent of awareness of library services by nursing and clinical medicine first year students and to determine the challenges faced in accessing library services. Using descriptive research design, 30 students were purposively selected. Findings revealed that there were more female students enrolled in the programmes. The study also established that the library was being used occasionally by many students. Results on the purpose for using the library showed that many were using it to read in order to improve personal competence. The findings also revealed that majority students were aware of book display services while challenge revealed was inadequate time to seek needed information. The need by LIUTEBM University management to consider improving internet connectivity in the library to encourage information access in electronic form was recommended. This was seen as way through which many users can begin frequenting the library. Increasing the library operational hours to allow students access information outside their lectures hours was also highlighted. Accordingly, LIUTEBM University management were urged to consider subscribing to more online journals that would allow utilization of electronic information to complement existing physical copies of information.

Keywords: Information needs, academic library, information seeking behavior.

INTRODUCTION

There has been an increase in the number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Zambia. As of April 2021, The Higher Education Authority had registered a total number of 62 universities (public and private). The increase is as a result of among others, the growing population as well as the need to cater for quality university education. According to O'Neill, Singh, & O'Donoghue (2004) the huge demand for higher education has been characterized by knowledge driven society which is anchored on aiding economies to catch up with more technically advanced societies. A knowledge driven society relates to the kind of competencies, abilities and attitudes that graduates need to adapt to in order to cope with a rapidly changing nation and global world (Mpolomoka, 2018).

Kojo (2017) adds that higher education occupies an important space in development of any country. It is through higher education that the fight against social exclusion by 'the educated' is achieved, which further influence decisions that affect their lives and are capable of receiving and sharing information, hence contributing to researching the knowledge and cultural heritage of humanity.

However, the provision of quality university education cannot be discussed without engaging an academic library. This is because academic libraries in different institutions of learning take up a central point which

ranges from but not limited to providing accurate, relevant and reliable information for research, consultancy and other developmental activities. Academic libraries play an important role towards achieving goals of tertiary institutions and it is almost impossible for academic institutions to be able to provide for the academic, intellectual and other interests and information needs of students without the services of proper libraries (Arthur, Brafi & Kuranchie, 2013).

According to Fabunmi (2002) Academic libraries are referred to as organized compilations of information resources either in print or non-print which form an essential part of tertiary institution. This further means that the development and service design of academic libraries must be in such a way that they meet the instructional programs of the particular institution (Akakandelwa, 2002).

Suleiman et al (2017) add that academic libraries designed in higher learning institutions are established to support teaching, learning and research. Thus, academic libraries are set up to support the universities' curricular as well as support research of the faculty and students. Information and services offered in any academic library must reflect the changing needs of its users at all times (Adeniran, 2011).

LIUTEBM University Background

Livingstone International University of Tourism Excellence and Business Management (LIUTEBM) were incorporated as the first tertiary education institution of tourism in Zambia in 2010. The growth of tourism education at tertiary level (university) was long overdue in that while the compliments of tourism products had been adequate, the knowledge and skills of the stakeholders and the learners had been restricted. The university commenced with six schools namely humanities and social sciences, environment and tourism, business and economics, law, computing and post-graduate. The mode of study for all programmes included Open Distance Learning (ODL), full-time, part-time, evening as well as weekend classes. At inception the university had 4 students but the number has drastically increased to over 700 as of 2018 (Liutebm Enrolment Register, 2015).

Currently the institution has further been accredited to offer diplomas in general nursing and clinical medicine under the newly established school of health sciences.

In order to enrich knowledge and relation, the institution collaborate with other international universities namely Manchester Metropolitan University in United Kingdom and GradXs in India among others. The collaboration is aimed at fostering networks in project certification to achieve higher levels of quality and excellence. The university is an associate member of the UNWTO and a member of the UNWTO scientific committee of the knowledge network.

Statement of the Problem

LIUTEBM University established a library that aims to provide services to students and staff members. The services are among but not limited to access to physical books, dissertations, modules, book borrowing etc. In the quest to further support virtual academic learning as well as access to online information, the university established a computer laboratory. However, it has been observed that since the provision of internet services to the students by the computer laboratory department, the library has continued to record a reduction in the number of students using the facility. Accordingly, newly enrolled students for the new accredited health programmes seem to have equally been convinced in frequenting the computer laboratory more than the library facility for their academic queries.

Main Objective

Assessing the use of academic library and information seeking behaviour of nursing and clinical medicine

first year students at LIUTEBM University.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine how often nursing and clinical medicine first year students use the library
2. To ascertain the purpose for which nursing and clinical medicine first year students use the library
3. To explore the extent of awareness of library services by nursing and clinical medicine first year students

Research Questions

1. How often do nursing and clinical medicine first year students use the library?
2. What is the purpose for which nursing and clinical medicine first year students use the library?
3. What is the extent of awareness of library services by nursing and clinical medicine students?
4. What challenges do they face in accessing library services?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information need is growing, as our society grows to further appreciate and depend more on information to survive and flourish. This is done in the quest to not only find facts but also acquire information on particular subjects (Adebayo, 2014). Thus, Information has become vital in every sphere of human endeavors as it denote initiatives, truths, imaginative works of mind and data of value potentially useful in decision-making, question answering, problem solving and all that which reduces uncertainty (Kaniki, 1991).

Ajiboye & Tella (2007) defined information need as an irregular state of awareness or gap in individual's knowledge in academia, professional setting or personal matters. Information sourcing therefore is essential in both academic and professional setting as means to finding a solution to uncertainties on various problems. The idea into information need can be looked at through understanding how users search for information sources and how they choose content to gather their needs (Oluwaseye, Akanni & Busuyi, 2017). This therefore implies that information need is influenced by many factors such as the range of information sources available, the background, professional orientation, motivation, and individual characteristics such as social, legal, political and economic belief (Kuhlthau, 2005).

On the other hand, information seeking behaviour denote a process in which individuals understand their problems, the information they need, the relevance criteria and then assess it in available spaces (Muhammad, 2009). Majid & Kassim (2000) adds that information seeking behaviour is broad in that it focuses on evaluating the information one is seeking before using it to satisfy their needs. Thus, information seeking is purposive as it arises from the need to satisfy goals. Individuals may interact with manual information systems or use computer-based system especially that the current age has been influenced and characterized by available multiple systems that provide information through human and computer interfaces using multiple methods for accessing and a redundancy of content from sources (Oluwaseye, Akanni & Busuyi, 2017). Therefore, academic libraries have adopted modern technology such as computers, RFID technology, OPAC, machines and other necessary materials to meet the needs of the users.

In academia and higher education in particular, the performance of students is not only dependent upon good facilities and quality staffing but also on how academic information is organized as well as student needs and seeking behavior towards the available information (Ajiboye & Tella, 2007).

Mishra et al. (2015) conducted a study focusing on Information need and Seeking Behavior of the Health Science Students of an Indian Deemed University in Bhubaneswar. The study found that the usage of e-resources for information retrieval by the students daily or on regular basis through internet or e-library was

higher than other retrieval process. The use of text, reference books and e-journals were also cited frequently by the students. As a means to attract more health students to the product and services offered by the library, the study recommended that the university library should come up with new techniques that will attract health science students towards library services.

Another similar study by Oluwaseye, Akanni & Busuyi (2017) focusing on Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Medical Students at the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria was conducted. The findings from this study revealed that information needs of medical students had many aspects with medical information coming first on the list, assignment and academic projects were the main purposes. Furthermore, internet was the most used by medical students out of other sources. Areas where medical students wanted improvement in the College of Medicine library collections include electronic databases, journals, textbooks and reference materials. The study therefore recommended that college management focus increasing the internet bandwidth in the library.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design as this allowed describing the behaviour as it related to the problem of the target population without any means of influencing it. According to Creswell (2012) a descriptive research design provided a useful means through which to assess the respondents' knowledge, attitudes, practices and perceptions.

This study targeted the first-year students enrolled at LIUTEBM University in the faculty of health sciences. The sample size for this study was 30 students pursuing diploma in nursing and clinical medicine and these were purposively sampled. Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Background information

The study examined the gender, programme of study and occupation of the students. The findings on gender indicated that 33.3% were males while 66.7% represented females. Although more males are now enrolling for health programmes such as nursing, the above gender disparity can be attributed to the fact that most health programmes are still dominated by females. This is supported by a study conducted by Oluwaseye, Akanni & Busuyi (2017) which had a 6.7% difference between females and male students enrolled in health-related programmes. Under the programmes of study, 80% of the participants were enrolled in general nursing while clinical medicine recorded 20%.

In order to find out whether the choice of programmes of study was influenced by occupation, the study found that 93.3% of the participants were students who had never been in formal employment. 3.3% indicated running a business while another (3.3%) indicated being in formal employment as shown in the table below.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	VALUES	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Gender	Male	10	33.3
	Female	20	66.7
	Total	30	100
Programme of Study	General Nursing	24	80

	Clinical Medicine	6	20
	Total	30	100
Occupation	Student	28	93.3
	Running a Business	1	3.3
	Employed	1	3.3
	Total	30	100

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of students

The frequency and purpose of using the library

The study solicited information from students on how often they used the library. The findings showed different times and period at which students frequent the library. 3.3% indicated using the library once in a week, 13.3% used the library three-times in a week while the majority (83.3%) stressed that they used the library occasionally.

Accordingly, findings on the purpose of library use revealed that the majority (40%) were frequenting the library to read as a means of improving personal competence. Those reading to prepare for exams and lectures accounted for 6.7% and 3.3%. Furthermore, 37.9% and 13.3% accounted for those who used the library to search for data when writing assignments and those who indicated others as indicated in the table below.

Frequency of Library Use	Frequency	percentage
Once a week	1	3.3
3 times a week	4	13.3
Occasionally	25	83.3
Total	30	100
Purpose of using the library	Frequency	Percentage
Lecture preparation	1	3.3
Studying for Exams	2	6.7
Reading to improve personal competency	12	40
Data search when writing assignment	11	37.9
Others	4	13.3
Total	30	100

The findings above clearly revealed that the majority students pursuing general nursing and clinical medicine at LIUTEBM university rarely frequent the library for their information needs. Furthermore, findings on the purpose showed that among those who use the library, majority use materials for reading to improve personal competency, an act which is not necessarily the core function of an academic library but a success in meeting their personal competency information needs. These findings are different from the study by Arthur, Brafi & Kuranchie (2013) where it was revealed that majority of the respondents visited the library several times in a week. This study also showed that majority of the students were using library resources for their academic and other information needs in the dawn of technology driven platforms such as the Internet. The distinction can be attributed to the different services offered by these libraries. Although Arthur, Brafi & Kuranchie’s study revealed technological platform being utilised by students in the library, not much has been adopted by LIUTEBM library to incorporate such services to its users.

Most services provided by LIUTEBM library are physical and no major technological platforms have been

adopted to improve service delivery to students. This is visible from the findings below which indicate what students considered to be the major source of information when using the library. 83.3% indicated using physical books, 10% indicated sourcing information from the offline calibre library and 2% indicated internet as their source of information as indicated on graph 1 below.

Level of awareness of library services

The study solicited information from students on the extent of awareness of library services available. The findings showed different levels of awareness from the students. The majority participants (89.7%) indicated being aware of book display services, 3.4% indicated awareness on using compiled bibliographic services while 6.9% showed awareness on using offline book access (Calibre installation) as shown on graph 2 below.

The findings evidently showed that levels of awareness of library services offered differ even though students pursued related programmes. The majority of the students were conversant with books on display services as this was influenced by the limited services available.

A similar study was conducted by Choudounská and Krueger (2016) which aimed at assessing awareness of Library Services by bachelor students at two Czech Technology Universities. It was found that majority students had very poor awareness of library services as many were conscious of the library as a study space. These findings are different from those of this study in that while LIUTEBM library offers limited services, there is sufficient evidence of students being aware of the services. This is not the case for Czech Technology students who only envision the library as a study space.

Information was sought from the students to find out the challenges they faced in accessing library services. Majority students (46.7%) indicated inadequate time to seek information, 23.3% indicated inadequacy of relevant materials. Those who highlighted being unaware of where and how to obtain needed materials accounted for 20% while those who indicated uncooperative attitude of the library staff indicated 10% as shown on table 3 below.

Challenges faced in accessing library services

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequacy of relevant materials	7	23.3
No knowledge of where and how to obtain needed materials	6	20
Inadequate time to seek needed information	14	46.7
Uncooperative attitude of the library staff	3	10
Total	30	100

The findings above clearly showed that majority students did not have adequate time to search for the information which they needed at a particular time. This could be attributed to the urgency for which the information was sought for hence they were not willing to search for information using physical copies which are a major source in LIUTEBM library. Another attributing factor influencing the findings could be the operational hours of LIUTEBM library that does not support access beyond lecture hours.

CONCLUSION

The study findings revealed that majority of the respondents were females (66.7%). Further, majority of the respondents were enrolled under general nursing programme. The participants used physical books as their major source of information and the majority indicated using the library to read books in order to improve personal competence. Accordingly, most participants were aware of book display services while many

stressed that among the challenges faced, there was inadequate time to seek needed information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. LIUTEBM University management should consider improving internet connectivity in the library to encourage information access in electronic form.
2. Increase the library operational hours to allow students access information outside their lecture hours.
3. LIUTEBM University management should consider subscribing to more online journals that will allow utilization of electronic information to complement existing physical copies of information.

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