Extent of Accessibility and Utilization of Reference Materials by Nigerian University Undergraduates

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Abstract: The reference section of every library remains an important arm of such library. It contains materials needed for teaching, learning, community development and research. However, studies have shown that most of these materials are rarely consulted by library users, hence, the rationale of the present study which investigated the extent to which reference materials are accessed and utilized by the undergraduates of library and information science (LIS), Taraba State University (TSU), Jalingo. Six research objectives with corresponding research questions were considered and answered. The descriptive survey method was adopted using a total population of 133 final year undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo. Furthermore, the complete census technique was employed to study the entire population. A fifty-eight (58) items questionnaire was used for data collection. 133 copies were distributed, but 127 (95.5%) copies were returned and found suitable for data analysis. The data analysis was done using descriptive statistics of mean scores and frequency counts. Findings revealed a high extent of accessibility of a good number of reference materials. Few of these materials were reported to be utilized to a high extent leading to a relationship between the extent of accessibility and utilization. However, numerous challenges were identified to be facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by the undergraduates. The study concludes that the extent of accessibility determines the extent of utilization which all proved to be high in the library studied. It was, however, among other things, recommended that the management of university libraries should intensify efforts to improve the number and quality of reference materials provided and make them accessible to their users.

Keywords: Libraries, Accessibility, Utilization, Reference Materials, Undergraduates, Extent

1. Introduction

Libraries are valued based on their ability to provide the required information and information resources for users' needs. It is a fact that the necessity for the provision of these resources in libraries lies in the fact that accessibility of information has become central and vital in decision making, considering the application of such information to both the private and public livelihood. Furthermore, modern librarianship has transformed the traditional function of acquiring, preserving and providing access to the vast amount of printed materials to what is perceived to be more sophisticated information environment and infrastructure, with the view of ensuring and enhancing quality access as well as effective and efficient use of the library resources and

services regardless of whether it is a university library or any other library. The absence of these information resources in our societies makes the teaching, learning, research functions of the library, unrealistic resulting in lack of requisite support for the library services and programmes [19, 9]. It is very clear that among the array of the information resources of the library, is the reference materials.

Reference materials are information resources which come in the form of print or non-print materials consulted in the library alone (that is, the print reference materials cannot be borrowed from the library but are consulted within the library's four walls) for research or other referral purposes. According to Abudulahi and Manze, the value of the reference materials is immeasurable to the library users who need them to obtain relevant information [1]. Agreeably,

Hassan, Albaba and Ahmad observed that reference materials provide a good introduction to a topic, adding to the provision of brief factual information. They provide the summaries and clarify issues be defining unfamiliar terms and identifying additional relevant sources such as books and periodicals and titles [4]. Such materials are consulted for definite items of information rather than to be read sequentially from cover to cover. Examples include dictionaries, encyclopaedias, atlases, yearbooks, biographies, gazetteers, indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, projects, theses, dissertations, etc. Each of these reference materials contains diverse information ranging from the simple definition of words and concepts to detailed explanations of ideas and events. They represent one of the essential information resources that have found their way into modern libraries. This is because, their value is inestimable in the hands of a user, who requires quality information to meet a need. No wonder they are often referred to as gold mines of knowledge.

Library reference materials are grouped into two categories, viz-a-viz, the source and the access categories. The source type of reference materials contain the information needed by the users (e.g. encyclopaedias, dictionaries, and handbooks). On the other hand, the access type refers the user to the source of information required (e.g. indexes, abstracts, and bibliographies). Additionally, reference materials could be general or specific in the scope of their subject. The most important issue is the fact that these materials contain subjects and topics that are well researched and proven to be of a high academic and professional standard. Thus a scholarly research work carried out without consulting good reference materials is deemed to be shallow. Igwe rightly observed this by asserting that "a search for literature in research work will not be complete without examining some relevant reference materials necessary for exploring the topic". However, this can only be achieved with the production of retrieval and accessibility links [6].

Accessibility could be seen as the quality of being at hand when needed [5]. It is not the same thing as availability. This is because availability is concerned with resources physically located in the library, while accessibility focuses on problems of storage, display, promptly storing, displaying, and transmitting information resources to use o say that accessibility to reference materials is of paramount concern and relevant to the university library users. Without access to reference materials, utilization is unrealizable, and the value of the reference material is meaningless to users. In separate studies, the availability of information resources does not automatically translate to resource accessibility and utilization [10]. Additionally, the issue of access poses numerous challenges to both library management and users because making resources accessible demands certain requisite skills, which when lacking, renders resources available but not accessible. Furthermore, weak and inadequate cataloguing, shelving, and technical services contribute to the failure of accessibility of library reference

materials. Hence, university libraries must process and make accessible reference materials before users can make sense of them. It is evident that reference materials available in most Nigerian university libraries are mostly print materials, thus, the problems of accessibility manifest from indexing, abstracting, cataloguing, and bibliographic compilation.

As a library standard procedure, information resources not processed cannot be utilized by users. Neelameghan [19] confirms this by the assertion that accessibility is a prerequisite to information utilization. Further clarifying the concept of utilization, Hornby sees utilization as the act of putting something into use [5]. Utilization is the right use of acquired information [21]. It implies taking proper advantage of available resources [7]. It is important to understand that the utilization of reference materials depends on their availability in the library and also being accessible to the users. The condition implies that availability and accessibility must be satisfied for utilization to be achieved. The mere acquisition of reference materials by a university library does not translate into accessibility. Granting access to university library reference materials requires a series of protocols (cataloguing, indexing, etc.) to ensure that users can identify and locate the materials [14]. It is also important for university libraries to consider user needs during the acquisition stage of reference materials to maintain relevance and increase utilization. Nonetheless, appropriate accessibility and utilization of the right reference materials is a sine qua non to the delivery of quality and effective library services. This justifies, to a large extent, the reason for their acquisition in university libraries.

From observation, the accessibility of reference materials influences their utilization by students. Agreeably, it is very clear that the first call of library functionality demands that the user has access to adequate information resources to meet their needs. This is the reason for the organizational function of the library. Additionally, Okafor, V. N [15] revealed that before library users can utilize information in the library, the functions of making information readily available and accessible must first be activated. The university library serves the diverse academic community and in that respect must live up to the expectations of helping users, especially the undergraduates to achieve their respective information, research and recreational needs. As a university library, most of the information materials and services tend towards the academic performance and success of students, as well as the goal of the university in fulfilling higher education objectives. Unfortunately, preliminary surveys and available literature have shown that most libraries in Nigerian universities are poorly funded causing undergraduate students to experience a dearth of reference materials to supplement classroom instructions and carry out their research writings (assignment, term papers and project works).

Additionally, when reference materials are available they are neither accessible nor utilized due to one problem or another associated with the technical processing (cataloguing, classifying, indexing, abstracting, etc.) of these

referencing materials. Moreover, it has been widely assumed and reported that the provision of reference materials in a sufficient balance and their proper organization encourages library users to utilize them. Based on the above assertion, this study examined the extent of accessibility and utilization of reference materials in Danbaba Danfulani Suntai Library, Taraba State University, Jalingo by undergraduates of library and information science.

1.1. Research Objectives

This study examined the extent of accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of library and information science (LIS), Taraba State University, (TSU), Jalingo. Specifically, the study examined the:
1. reference materials accessible to undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo;
2. extent of accessibility of reference materials to undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo;
3. reference materials utilized by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo;
4. extent of utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo;
5. challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo; and
6. solutions to challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo.

1.2. Research Questions

The following questions were answered
1. What are the reference materials accessible to undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?
2. What is the extent of accessibility of reference materials to undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?
3. What are the reference materials utilized by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?
4. To what extent are reference materials utilized by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?
5. What are the challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?
6. What are the solutions to challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?

2. Review of Related Literature

In university libraries, reference materials are to assist the lecturers and students in teaching and learning processes [2]. For this reason, they are often held by libraries as resources which are either non-circulating or circulated under strict limitations. However, in the case of some very useful or popular titles, the patron is best served when the library can own at least two copies to allow for a "reference" and a circulating copy. It is important to note that the university library is primarily concerned with services of interpreting library resources to the research students as well as making the user know their university library plays a crucial role in the achievement of the goals and objectives [8]. This singular function can only be performed with the availability, accessibility and utilization of library information resources [9]. To this end, Ademodi assessed the awareness and use of reference sources by undergraduates in Adekunle Ajasin University Library and found that there is a significantly high response in awareness of reference materials by the majority of the respondents while the use of such reference sources is significantly low [2]. The reason could be attributed to the problem of accessibility because these materials are available as well as the users being aware of their availability.

Nonetheless, Ademodi's finding validates the submission of Popoola that the inability of university libraries to meet the information requirements of some library users might have forced them to use personal collections when conducting research, especially, on the Internet [2, 20]. To Okeke, Oghenetga and Nwabu, the problem could be attributed to the library's poor reputation to lack of accessibility to reference materials [16]. This prompted the study of Okafor which revealed the significant role of serials accessible in their utilization [15]. This is not far from the submission of Neelamegham [8] which identified accessibility as one of the prerequisites of information use. In the same vein, Kuhlthau [8] corroborated this by asserting that the action of information seeking depends on the needs, the perceived accessibility, sources, and information-seeking habits. This is to say that, by providing access to information resources, university libraries play a significant role in the library users' experience. Similarly, Onye investigated the availability, accessibility, and utilization of information resources by students of in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri and reported that the majority of the respondents agreed to the utilization of information resources that were available and accessible in the library [19]. In the same vein, Ishola and Obadere examined the availability, access to and level of use of academic library information resources of selected academic libraries in South-western Nigeria and revealed that there is a high level of accessibility leading to daily use of information sources in the selected Nigerian Universities studied [8].

Nonetheless, Ajani, Buraimo, Adegbaye and Olusanya investigated the level of awareness and utilisation of reference materials and services among undergraduates in four public universities in South-west, Nigeria and found a high level of awareness and utilisation of reference materials and services among the undergraduates. It also found obsolete reference materials as among the factors hindering the utilization of reference materials and services in the public universities studied [3]. Furthermore, according to Makinde, Aba and Ugah, the more accessible reference materials are, the more likely they are to be used [11]. This is because library users tend to use reference materials that require the least effort to access. To facilitate the accessibility of information materials in the libraries, Nnadozie; Makinde,

Aba and Ugah opined that the library is expected to provide effective access tools such as catalogues, bibliographies, guides, indexes and abstracts but this is not seen in some university libraries [13, 11] owing to what Ngalla attributed to the uncooperative attitudes of their institutional authorities, which make communication very difficult, with the consequence being that management issues of the library are left unresolved as well as the issue of poor funding and other untold control and interference in its decision-making process [12]. Though these challenges may exist, Ademodi submits that the management of the university library should be aware of the current needs of their users, which may vary from one library to another as well as from time to time and devise proper means of meeting them [2].

3. Methodology

The descriptive survey method was adopted for this study using a total population of 133 final year undergraduates of library and information science, Taraba State University, Jalingo. The choice of this population was based on the fact that the selected level and department constitute major users of the reference materials in the Danababa Danfulani Suntai Library, Taraba State University, Jalingo. Furthermore, the entire population was studied leading to the adoption of a complete census technique. The study made use of a fifty-eight (58) item-statement questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was entitled "*Questionnaire on Extent of Accessibility and Utilization of Reference Materials by Undergraduates (QEAURMU)*" and

was validated by three experts. Furthermore, the questionnaire was made up of two sections, A and B. Section A elicited background information from the respondents while section B elicited data on the extent of accessibility and utilization of reference materials. Response to each item was weighted on a four-point scale, namely: Strongly Agree (SA = 4); Agree (A = 3); Disagree (D = 2); Strongly Disagree (SD = 1); and Very High Extent (VHE = 4); High Extent (HE = 3); Low Extent (LE = 2); and Very Low Extent (VLE = 1). The face-to-face method of questionnaire administration was used to collect data from respondents. A total of 133 copies were distributed, but 127 (95.5%) copies were returned and found suitable for data analysis. The data analysis was done using descriptive statistics particularly mean scores and frequency counts and presented in frequency tables. A criterion mean value of 2.50 was used in answering research questions 1, 3, 5, and 6. The implication was that any item with a mean value of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed, while, any item with a mean score below 2.50 was regarded as disagreed. Additionally, the real number limit of 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Extent); 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Extent); 2.50 – 3.49 (High Extent); and 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Extent) was used in answering research question 2 and 4.

4. Presentation of Result

The presentation of results gotten from the field survey follows the order of questions in the questionnaire.

Research Question One: What are the reference materials accessible to undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?

Table 1. Reference Materials Accessible to Undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo.

S/n	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	I have access to dictionaries available in the library	65	32	15	15	3.16	Agreed
2	Encyclopedias are accessible to me	65	17	25	20	3.00	Agreed
3	Yearbooks in my library are accessible	65	17	20	25	2.96	Agreed
4	I have access to projects/ theses/ dissertations available in the library	54	31	25	17	2.96	Agreed
5	I have access to reports in the library	39	46	30	12	2.88	Agreed
6	Gazetteers in the library are accessible	38	21	40	28	2.54	Agreed
7	Handbooks available in the library are accessible	49	31	47	0	2.65	Agreed
8	I have access to the thesaurus available in the library	20	39	6	62	2.13	Disagreed
9	Parliamentary white papers in the library are accessible	20	21	18	68	1.94	Disagreed
10	Almanacs in the library are accessible	49	22	30	26	2.74	Agreed
11	I have access to directories available in the library	54	30	23	20	2.93	Agreed
12	I have access to maps and atlases available in the library	53	36	6	36	2.87	Agreed
	Cluster Average					2.73	Agreed

Note: Criterion Mean = 2.50
Key: SA - Strongly Agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree.

Table 1 shows the respondents' views on the reference materials accessible to them. Accessibility of twelve (12) reference materials ranging from dictionaries, encyclopedias, projects/ theses/dissertations, reports, gazetteers, handbooks, thesaurus, parliamentary white papers, almanacs, directories, to maps and atlases. The result shows that majority agreed with the accessibility of 10 of the 12 reference materials investigated, accounting for a cluster average mean of 2.73. The reference materials agreed to be accessible to the majority of the respondents and their mean values include dictionaries

(3.16), encyclopedias (3.00), yearbooks (2.96), projects/theses/ dissertations (2.96), reports (2.88), gazetteers (2.54), handbooks (2.65), almanacs (2.74), directories (2.93), and maps and atlases (2.87) (see item statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12). However, the majority of the respondents disagreed with the accessibility of thesaurus (2.13), and parliamentary white papers (1.94). A clearer picture of the responses based on the cluster mean of 2.73 obtained shows that the majority of the respondents agreed with the fact that different reference materials are accessible to them.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of accessibility of reference materials to undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?

Table 2. *Extent of Accessibility of Reference Materials to Undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo.*

S/n	References Materials	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	Decision
13	I have access to dictionaries available in the library	49	46	15	17	3.00	HE
14	Encyclopedias are accessible to me	59	21	25	22	2.92	HE
15	Yearbooks in my library are accessible	49	31	20	27	2.80	HE
16	I have access to projects/ theses/ dissertations available in the library	54	36	26	11	3.05	HE
17	I have access to reports in the library	49	37	35	6	3.02	HE
18	Gazetteers in the library are accessible	26	31	47	23	2.47	LE
19	Handbooks available in the library are accessible	49	38	5	35	2.80	HE
20	Almanacs in the library are accessible	38	21	25	43	2.43	LE
21	I have access to directories available in the library	43	41	22	21	2.83	HE
22	I have access to maps and atlases available in the library	44	40	15	28	2.79	HE
	Cluster Average					2.81	HE

Note: 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Extent); 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Extent); 2.50 – 3.49 (High Extent); and 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Extent)
Key: VHE - Very High Extent; HE - High Extent; LE - Low Extent; VLE - Very Low Extent.

Table 3 presents data collected and analyzed on the extent of accessibility of reference materials to undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo. The extent of accessibility of ten (10) reference materials found accessible as captured in Table 1 was investigated. The reference materials include dictionaries, encyclopedias, projects/theses/dissertations, reports, gazetteers, handbooks, almanacs, directories, and maps and atlases. The result shows that the accessibility of 8 of the 10 reference materials was rated high while 2 were rated low extent. The reference materials are accessible to a high extent by the majority of the respondents and their mean values include dictionaries (3.00), encyclopedias (2.92), yearbooks (2.80), projects/theses/dissertations (3.05), reports (3.02), handbooks (2.80), directories (2.33), and maps and atlases (2.79) (see item statements 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, and 22). However, the majority of the respondents rated the accessibility of gazetteers (2.47) and almanacs (2.43) to a low extent. The conclusion flows from a cluster average mean of 2.81, which indicated that the majority of the respondents access the reference materials to a high extent.

Research Question Three: What are the reference materials utilized by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?

Table 3. *Reference Materials Utilized by Undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo.*

S/n	References Materials	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
23	I make use of the dictionaries in the library	64	25	32	6	3.16	Agreed
24	I utilize the encyclopedias available in the library	35	11	75	6	2.59	Agreed
25	I utilize the yearbooks in my library	44	43	15	25	2.83	Agreed
26	Projects/Theses/Dissertations are utilized by me in the library	95	15	12	5	3.57	Agreed
27	I utilize the reports found in the library	38	66	6	17	2.98	Agreed
28	I make use of gazetteers available in the library	20	45	12	50	2.28	Disagreed
29	I make use of the handbooks available in the library	68	47	6	6	3.39	Agreed
30	I utilize thesaurus in my library	5	33	46	43	2.00	Disagreed
31	I utilize parliamentary white papers in the library	10	32	27	58	1.95	Disagreed
32	Almanacs are utilized by me in the library	34	31	50	12	2.69	Agreed
33	I make use of the directories in the library	56	41	25	5	3.17	Agreed
34	I utilize maps and atlases in the library	53	11	6	57	2.47	Disagreed
	Cluster Average					2.76	Agreed

Note: Criterion Mean = 2.50
Key: SA - Strongly Agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree.

Table 3 shows the respondents' responses to the reference materials utilized by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo. The utilization of twelve (12) reference materials, which include dictionaries, encyclopedias, projects/theses/dissertations, reports, gazetteers, handbooks, thesaurus, parliamentary white papers, almanacs, directories, and maps and atlases was examined. The result shows that the majority of the respondents agreed with the utilization of 8 of the 12 reference materials investigated, accounting for a cluster average mean of 2.76. The reference materials agreed to be utilized by the majority of the respondents and their mean values include dictionaries (3.16), encyclopaedias (2.59), yearbooks (2.83), projects/theses/dissertations (3.57), reports (2.98), handbooks (3.39), almanacs (2.69), and directories (3.17). On the other hand, item statements 28, 30, 31, and 34 were disagreed by the majority of the respondents. It presents the non-utilization of gazetteers (2.28), thesaurus (2.00), parliamentary white papers (1.95), and maps and atlases (2.47). The summary of the result with a cluster mean of 2.76 indicates that the majority of the respondents agreed with the use of a large number of reference materials in their university library.

Research Question Four: To what extent are reference materials utilized by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?

Table 4. *Extent of Utilization of Reference Materials by Undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo.*

S/n	Item Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	Decision
35	I make use of the dictionaries in the library	64	15	0	48	2.75	HE
36	I utilize the encyclopedias available in the library	63	16	0	48	2.74	HE
37	I utilize the yearbooks in my library	39	35	25	28	2.67	HE
38	Projects/Theses/Dissertations are utilized by me in the library	62	37	6	22	3.09	HE
39	I utilize the reports found in the library	58	41	0	28	3.02	HE
40	I make use of the handbooks available in the library	47	11	54	5	2.79	HE
41	Almanacs are utilized by me in the library	33	61	15	18	2.86	HE
42	I make use of the directories in the library	23	31	22	51	2.20	LE
	Cluster Average					2.76	HE

Note: 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Extent); 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Extent); 2.50 – 3.49 (High Extent); and 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Extent)
Key: VHE - Very High Extent; HE - High Extent; LE - Low Extent; VLE - Very Low Extent.

Table 4 reports data generated and analysed on the extent of utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of library and information science, Taraba State University, Jalingo. The extent of utilization of eight (8) reference materials reported to be utilized by the majority of the respondents and captured in Table 3 was investigated. These reference materials include dictionaries, encyclopedias, projects/theses/dissertations, reports, handbooks, almanacs, and directories. The result shows that the utilization of 7 of the 8 reference materials was rated high while the utilization of directories as captured in item statement 42, with a mean value of 2.20 was rated low

extent by the majority of the respondents. The reference materials highly utilized by the majority of the respondents and their mean values include dictionaries (2.75), encyclopaedias (2.74), yearbooks (2.67), projects/theses/ dissertations (3.09), reports (3.02), handbooks (2.79), and almanacs (2.86). The conclusion flows from a cluster average mean of 2.76, which indicates a high extent of utilization of reference materials by the majority of the respondents.

Research Question Five: What are the challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?

Table 5. *Challenges facing the Accessibility and Utilization of Reference Materials by Undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo.*

S/n	Item Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
43	There is difficulty in accessing reference materials in our library	34	77	5	11	3.06	Agreed
44	There is a high provision of irrelevant reference materials	35	67	5	20	2.92	Agreed
45	No guide to the use of reference materials is provided	39	58	30	0	3.07	Agreed
46	Inadequate reference materials	65	57	5	0	3.47	Agreed
47	Search and retrieval difficulty	52	75	0	0	3.41	Agreed
48	Inadequate reference materials	67	55	0	5	3.45	Agreed
49	Absence of electronic reference materials	29	61	32	5	2.90	Agreed
50	Absence of modern retrieval devices	55	55	12	5	3.26	Agreed
	Cluster Average					3.19	Agreed

Note: Criterion Mean = 2.50
Key: SA - Strongly Agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree.

Table 5 presents data generated on the challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo. The result with a cluster average mean of 3.19 shows that majority of the respondents agreed with all the item statements as the challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo. These challenges and mean values include; there is difficulty in accessing reference materials in our library (3.06), there is a high provision of irrelevant reference materials (2.92), no guide to the use of reference materials is provided (3.07), inadequate reference materials (3.47), search and retrieval difficulty (3.41), inadequate reference materials (3.45), absence of electronic reference materials (2.90), and absence of modern retrieval devices (3.26).

Research Question Six: What are the solutions to challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo?

Table 6 captures the respondents' views on the solutions to challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo. Eight (8) perceived solutions were examined of which the majority of the respondents that constitute a cluster average mean of 3.36 agreed to all the item statements as the solutions to challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo. The solutions include; the access point to reference materials should be adequately provided (3.52), the library should ensure the provision of relevant reference materials (3.55), there is the need the provision of adequate guide to the use of reference materials (3.42), acquisition of adequate reference materials should be enhanced (3.53), ensuring easy search and retrieval means (3.29), allocation of adequate funds to purchase reference materials (3.03), acquisition of electronic reference materials (3.19), and provision of modern retrieval devices (3.36).

Table 6. *Solutions to Challenges Facing the Accessibility and Utilization of Reference Materials by Undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo.*

S/n	Item Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
51	Access points to reference materials should be adequately provided	71	51	5	0	3.52	Agreed
52	The library should ensure the provision of relevant reference materials	70	57	0	0	3.55	Agreed
53	There is a need for the provision of an adequate guide to the use of reference materials	53	74	0	0	3.42	Agreed
54	Acquisition of adequate reference materials should be enhanced	72	50	5	0	3.53	Agreed
55	Ensuring easy search and retrieval means	49	72	0	6	3.29	Agreed
56	Allocation of an adequate fund to purchase reference materials	32	67	28	0	3.03	Agreed
57	Acquisition of electronic reference materials	47	63	11	6	3.19	Agreed
58	Provision of modern retrieval devices	52	69	6	0	3.36	Agreed
	Cluster Average					3.36	Agreed

Note: Criterion Mean = 2.50
Key: SA - Strongly Agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree.

5. Discussion of Findings

Considering the Objective 1 of the study, the study found out that a high number of reference materials are accessible to the undergraduates of the department studied. Amongst the reference materials accessible are dictionaries, encyclopedias, yearbooks, projects/theses /dissertations, reports, gazetteers, handbooks, almanacs, directories, and maps and atlases. The implication of this report is that, not only does the library acquire reference materials, but they also ensure that these materials are accessible to the user community. This finding agrees with the work of Ishola, B. C. and Obadere, S. O. [8] and Ademodi, D. T. [2], which reported a significantly high response in awareness and accessibility of reference materials. Contrarily, the non-accessibility of thesaurus and parliamentary white papers was revealed. It could be best assumed that either these materials are not available or in the case of their availability, they are either kept in closed access or the absence of retrieval tools. This might have informed the assertion of Igwe, U. O. [6] that accessibility of reference materials can only be achieved with the production of retrieval and accessibility links.

On the extent of accessibility of reference materials by the undergraduates studied, the study revealed that the majority of the respondents rated high extent of accessibility of dictionaries, encyclopedias, yearbooks, projects/theses/ dissertations, reports, handbooks, directories, and maps and atlases while gazetteers and almanacs are lowly accessed. This is clear indication that there is high extent of accessibility of reference materials in the library studied. Consequently, the finding of the study agrees with the work of Ishola, B. C. and Obadere, S. O. [8], which found out that there is high level of accessibility of information sources in the selected Nigerian universities studied.

The study examined the utilization of reference materials by the undergraduate studied and found that numerous reference materials are utilized by the students. These materials include dictionaries, encyclopaedias, yearbooks, projects/theses/ dissertations, reports, handbooks, almanacs, and directories. Furthermore, a comparison of Tables 1 and 3 shows that although 10 reference materials were found to be accessible, only 8 were utilized by majority of the students. The implication could be that accessibility is not the only

yardstick for utilization of reference materials, perceived needs of the users can also contribute. This is to say that reference materials may be accessible but when the users are not in need of them, utilization may not be possible. However, finding shows that all the materials agreed to be utilized were all found accessible. Based on this finding, it is clear that the undergraduates make use of those reference materials that are accessible to them. This study corroborates with the work of Onye, U. U. [19] which reported that majority of the respondents agreed to the utilization of information resources that were available and accessible in the library. Furthermore, the study of Okafor, V. N. [15] revealed a significant role of library resources' accessibility in their utilization. According to Makinde, O. T., et. al. [11], the more accessible reference materials are, the more likely they are to be used.

On the extent of utilization of reference materials, results from the study showed that the undergraduates studied utilize reference materials to a high extent in the library. This study corroborates with the earlier report of Iroaganachi, M. A. and Ilogho, J. E. [7], which reported that majority of the respondents used reference materials frequently while few of them did not with the reason that they could not do without the use of reference materials in their research work. On the other hand, the present study contradicts the study of Ademodi, D. T. [2], which revealed that the response rate of use of reference materials is significantly low. The disparity may be as a result of the study considering all the undergraduates of a particular university whereas the focus of this present study is on the undergraduates of LIS, TSU, Jalingo. The year of conducting the research could also be a reason. It is however important to understand that the two findings will not be rejected.

On the challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates of LIS, TSU, the study found out the existence of numerous challenges. These challenges as reported in Table 5 include: inaccessibility of reference materials, provision of irrelevant reference materials, no guide to the use, inadequate reference materials, search and retrieval difficulty, inadequate reference materials, absence of electronic reference materials, and absence of modern retrieval devices. Based on these revealed challenges, there is low accessibility and utilization of some reference materials in the university library studied. It

therefore correlates with the reports of researchers such as Onye, U. U. [19] and Okafor, V. N. [15] which revealed that the most libraries suffer from limited sources of information, and the available resources were not maximally positioned for access by students. Ngalla attributed the challenges to the uncooperative attitudes of their institutional authorities, which make communication very difficult, with the consequence being that management issues of the library are left unresolved as well as the issue of poor funding and other untold control and interference in its decision making process [19]. Furthermore, Hassan, A., et. al. [4] observed that most library patrons still do not make adequate use of these reference resources as a result of some factors, which Okorafor, K., et. al. [17] attributed poor use of reference collections to poor or low level of awareness about the existence and poor knowledge about the importance of the collections to users. Additionally, Okeke, I. E., et. al. [16] identified obsoleteness and irrelevancy of the reference collections in meeting information demands of patron, while Onifade and Sowole concluded that most library patrons are ignorant of the fact that reference materials are readily available for their consumption [18].

Nonetheless, the study in its attempt to discover the solutions to the challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduate students of LIS, TSU, Jalingo reveals the following solutions: Provision of access point to reference materials, provision of relevant reference materials, provision of adequate guide to the use of reference materials, acquisition of adequate reference materials, ensuring easy search and retrieval means, allocation of adequate funds to purchase reference materials, acquisition of electronic reference materials, and provision of modern retrieval devices. This study followed the path of Onye, U. U. [19], which recommended the need to redirect focus towards expanding the library sources to take advantage of technology to enhance library stock and improve available, accessible, and utilizable information resources for students, among other things. Though some challenges may exist, Ademodi submits that the management of the university library should be aware of the current needs of their users, which may vary from one library to another as well as from time to time and devise proper means of meeting them [2].

6. Conclusion

From the study, the researcher conclude that reference materials are made accessible and utilized by undergraduates of library and information science, Taraba State University, Jalingo to a high extent. This is to say that the library of Taraba State University, Jalingo is making a great effort in ensuring that its materials are accessible to the students for utilization. From the findings on materials accessible and utilized, one may conclude that accessibility remains the bridge to utilization. It is only when these reference materials are accessible, that usage can be attracted.

Nonetheless, accessibility and utilization of reference materials by undergraduates has become a thing of serious attention to focus on because most of these students manifest negative attitudes to library and library resources. This could be attributed to the issue of problem of accessibility and utilization of library resources with high preference to the Internet where accessibility is easily granted. This assertion has been revealed in many literature. However, this is among the challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of reference materials. It, therefore, concludes that the effective accessibility and utilization of reference materials in university libraries by library users are faced with numerous challenges. These challenges need to be handled to achieve a very high level of accessibility and utilization of reference materials. However, solutions were provided for the challenges as reported by the study. These challenges can be overcome by some strategies if applied.

7. Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1) Management of university libraries should intensify effort in improve the number and quality of reference materials provided and make them accessible to their users.

2) It is also important for university libraries to understand the role of access points in the accessibility and utilization of reference materials, and further build on it. This can be done by ensuring the accuracy of catalogue card production and filing, proper shelving and provision of shelf guides, among other things. Not forgetting the electronic access point.

3) Not only acquiring reference materials. University libraries should make sure that the needs of the users are taken into consideration in the process of acquiring reference materials. This will go a long way in ensuring that relevant materials are acquired.

4) As well, the issue of adequacy in acquisition should be considered. Libraries should make provision for multiple copies of reference materials to promote simultaneous utilization of such materials by users.

5) Adequate funding should be provided for university libraries as it will go a long way in helping the processes of acquisition and provision of access points for quality accessibility and utilization of reference materials in university libraries.

6) It is a serious issue that some students run away from the library as a result of their inability or inadequate knowledge of the library and how to use their resources and services. To this end, library user education should be enhanced. This user education may be through the teaching of 'use of library' courses, library orientation programmes, and library tours, among other means. The programs will create in the students the knowledge of the library, its resources and services and how to make judicious use of them.

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