

Use of Periodicals among Library and Information Science Postgraduate Students in University Libraries in Nigeria

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Abstract

Rationale of Study – This paper investigated the use of periodicals among Library and Information Science (LIS) postgraduate students in university libraries in Nigeria. The objectives were to explore the activities performed (use of periodicals) by postgraduate students in university libraries, ascertain the purposes of using periodicals, and determine the frequency at which postgraduate students use periodicals.

Methodology – The data for the study was gathered through a two-page questionnaire administered to 404 respondents who were accessible in the library and LIS departments. Three hundred eighty-eight (388) questionnaires were retrieved, representing a 96% return rate. The data were analysed statistically.

Findings – The survey results showed that searching for particular information, downloading from open-access databases, locating multiple sources from periodicals, and reading in the library are the activities performed by postgraduate students while using periodicals.

Implications – The findings of this study may be used by the university management and librarians to develop policies that will improve the subscription of searchable databases that encourage the usage of periodicals and other information resources among students within and outside the university libraries.

Originality – Though other studies have dealt with library usage, little, or no study, has been conducted on the activities (interaction) performed by users. This paper is the outcome of original research that has not been submitted elsewhere for publication.

Keywords

Periodicals, postgraduate students, searching, federal university, libraries, Nigeria

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1 Introduction

The use of periodicals means the exploitative/interactive activities a user performs. Someone who uses something to achieve their aim is a user. In the same vein, those who make use of periodicals for scholarly research are periodical users (postgraduate students). Also, those who enter the library or surf the library website and find periodicals helpful are library users. Barman (2020) defined a user "as a person who is actively seeking access to the information available in the library" (p. 1). The use of periodicals is a familiar ideology in university libraries. Still, librarians are trying to acquire periodicals that will translate to qualitative research by users in their various institutions. Kanwar Library (2019) avowed that "periodicals acquired should be effectively and ethically obtained at a reasonable and available cost, when needed, to reflect the needs of the university curriculum." It is also in this regard that the usefulness of periodicals is essential for students to communicate with their counterparts at large. Postgraduate students use periodicals to research, pursue individual interests, and support their claims on concerned issues.

In addition to using library periodicals, librarians should make efforts to ensure that students obtain proper academic activities. This is because the information is critical for effective academic functioning. Adetoro (2011) noted that practical, relevant, and timely information is crucial for purposeful living and survival. Postgraduate students need information for their daily functioning as students, thus the extent to which relevant information determines their academic success. Furthermore, the extent to which people can utilise information from various sources will determine the usefulness of information as a developmental resource. Students seek periodical collection for various purposes, such as to supplement coursework, complement other information resources, research work, and writing assignments, find specific information, extend knowledge, know current trends in research, understand key concepts, and improve writing and reading skills.

2 Literature review

Ashikuzzaman (2018) stated that "periodicals are resources which require frequent access and delivers a collection of data, be it text referring to full-text bases or electronic journals (e-journals) and are divided into two major categories viz; online resources which include e-journals, online databases, and websites" (p. 2). Other may include CD-ROM, diskettes, or other computer databases. Hadagali et al. (2012) investigated the use

of electronic resources by postgraduate students in different universities of Karnataka State and found that the information contained in electronic journals is better than that of print versions; most users access electronic journals to search for bibliographical information. Apart from using traditional periodicals such as journals, magazines, and so on by students, there is also the widespread shift to electronic formats of periodicals which have enabled academic librarians to provide users with an ever-increasing scope and breadth of quality information (Colón-Aguirre & Fleming-May, 2012). With the use of both traditional and electronic information resources, students will be able to attain academic excellence.

Asom et al. (2018, p. 5) revealed in their study that “most of the periodicals used by postgraduate students as identified, are online databases, electronic journals, CD-ROMs, electronic newspapers and magazines, and multimedia products were the kind of periodicals accessible to the postgraduate students except for Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) that was not accessible to the 88.9% of them”. This indicates that students depend on periodicals for current and up-to-date knowledge to enrich themselves and quality research output.

Thus, Zhang (2013) highlighted some of the reasons students select and use periodical sources, including the quality and characteristics of the content of a source: Is the content of a source truthful or correct? Is it easy to understand, and is it up-to-date? The source's characteristics: Is the source available or easy to access? The source's trustworthiness; is the source integral in motivation to be truthful? The usability of the source; is the source easy to use? The similarity of the source; is a source similar to the user in terms of interest? The scope of the source; is source information specific or includes many other topics? The user's emotional reaction to the source; the selection of the source is dependent on the emotional reactions of the user and social norms: whether the use of a source conforms to generally accepted norms. According to Khan (2014), students cannot conduct research only through books; they consult periodicals for up-to-date knowledge. However, it is convenient for students to consult required periodicals from the library or online because it saves their time and increases the necessity for knowledge sharing. Alade et al. (2014) studied the library use characteristics of students at the Nigeria University of Science and Technology and observed that the respondents never used information resources in the library. In other words, they visited the libraries for other purposes.

Okorie and Akanwa (2018) reported that, despite the emphasis placed on the use of periodicals in university libraries, there is a decline in their usage among postgraduate students. This view correlates with Abubakar and Adetimirin's (2017) view that postgraduate students' use of periodicals in Nigeria is on the downside. Nutsupkui and Owusu-Ansah (2017) studied how frequently faculty and students used serials in an African university library and observed that faculty and graduate students were relatively aware of the serials (periodical) collection in the library. However, despite this awareness, they used serials relatively less frequently. Similarly, Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) in a study found that students make low use of periodicals despite their availability because they (students) are not aware of the various channels through which information can be accessed; they also do not know the sources of this information and therefore cannot locate and retrieve them from their libraries. Chimah et al. (2014, p. 10) reported that "there is a decline in the usage of periodicals by postgraduate students in university libraries in Nigeria from 65(37.6%) in 2005 to 18(9.3%) in 2012. In 2006, usage dropped to 58(33.7%). However, in 2007, usage increased rapidly to 68(36.8%) but later dropped drastically".

Also, records from some of the serials sections visited showed a continuous decline in usage from a higher 40(29.5%) in 2015 to a lower 5(6.3%) in 2018. This could be attributed to the poor visibility and inaccessibility of periodicals, which might result from inadequate tools put in place and the financial status of the library to acquire scholarly publications that will enable usage. Adeniran's (2013) and Asom et al. (2018) findings indicated that postgraduate students of the universities under study were highly aware of all the listed periodicals in their study. These include electronic journals, CD-ROMs, and electronic newspapers. Ahmed and Vinayagamoorthy's (2014) findings also indicated that the electronic format of almost all important periodicals was preferred for academic purposes to the printed resources by their respondents. Millawithanachchi (2012) conducted a case study on the electronic resource usage of postgraduate students at the University of Colombo to investigate the critical success factors and identified technology as the most critical factor affecting the use of periodicals. According to Radboud University Library (2019), searching, downloading, retrieving (copying), borrowing, reading, printing, and referencing could indicate that library collections are being put to use. This idea also aligns with Olutoki and Osoba (2017), which noted that most postgraduate students search, browse and locate needed periodicals in the serials section using periodicals, particularly during their interaction. This is a vital discovery,

placing students at the focal point of information provision. This finding is in support of Odede (2018), who found that “an indication that postgraduate students use information resources greatly determined their ability to browse library online databases” (p.155). Also, retrieving 3.24(0.78), reading 3.26(0.78), printing, and creating an optional account on the library homepage are other indicators of using periodicals, as noted by the respondents

3 Statement of the Problem

The use of periodicals among students in Nigeria is far below the expectations of librarians. Hence, there is a need to formulate a policy to help discover the activities performed by postgraduate students and user communities to help them with the necessary periodicals to supplement their studies.

Periodicals are widely recognised information paths for students, academia, and researchers. Hence, they are acquired by libraries to satisfy the insatiable needs of their users, especially postgraduate students. Despite the numerous benefits associated with using periodicals, most students refrain from using them, which might be due to their inadequate knowledge of navigating the serials section and searching the available databases. As a result, periodicals that are the predominant carriers of up-to-date information cannot be utilised with ease and convenience. Consequently, this study investigates the use of periodicals among Library and Information Science postgraduate students in federal university libraries in Nigeria.

The main objective of this paper is the effective use of periodicals among library and information science postgraduate students in federal university libraries based on the activities performed in the library. Accordingly, there is a need for a proper organisation of periodicals for students to navigate and meet up with their information demands and needs. This is because periodicals are essential in keeping them abreast of information discovery to be better placed in the academic environment. Thus, they are published scholarly and theoretical research articles that have a high impact and are among the library's most vital sources of information.

The main research questions are: How do postgraduate students use (activities performed) periodicals in university libraries? What are the purposes of using periodicals? How frequently do postgraduate students use periodicals?

4 Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey method and was carried out in seven federal university libraries in Nigeria. The targeted population of the study was 404 postgraduate students from seven university libraries chosen randomly for the study, namely, Kenneth Dike Library (University of Ibadan), Nnamdi Azikiwe Library (University of Nigeria), Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library (Nnamdi Azikiwe University), University of Calabar Library, University of Uyo library, University of Ilorin library and Kashim Ibrahim library (Ahmadu Bello University). The technique adopted for the study was the purposive sampling technique. The questionnaire entitled: Use of Periodicals among Library and Information Science Postgraduate Students in federal university libraries in Nigeria (UPLISPFN) was the instrument used for data collection, and this was administered to the students on a one-on-one basis, which lasted about two weeks to ensure a high response rate. Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics for accurate and reliable results.

5 Findings of Study

This section reports the findings of the study. These have been presented based on the specific objectives of the study. Table 1 shows the response rate.

Table 1: Postgraduate Students' Questionnaire Response Rate

University Libraries	Number of Questionnaires Administered	Number of Questionnaires Returned	Percentage of Questionnaire Returned
Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Oyo State	137	136	99
Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State	52	45	87
Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State	50	50	100
University of Calabar Library, University of Calabar, Cross River State	36	36	100
University of Uyo Library, University of Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State	42	38	90
University of Ilorin Library, University of Ilorin, Kwara State	53	52	98
Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State	34	31	91
Total	404	388	96

Table 1 shows that 404 copies of the questionnaire for students were distributed, and 388 copies (96%) were returned. The response rate of 96% was considered adequate for the study because the standard and acceptable response rate for most studies is 60% (Dulle et al., 2010).

Research Question One: How do postgraduate students use (activity performed) periodicals in university libraries?

Table 2: Use (activity performed) of Periodicals among Postgraduate Students

Activities	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD.
Searching for a particular information	232	144	9	3	3.56	.58
Locating multiple sources from periodicals	184	165	30	9	3.35	.72
Downloading from open access/databases	200	143	32	13	3.37	.77
Retrieving periodicals from other websites	164	167	45	12	3.24	.78
Reading in the library/on-screen reading	169	160	49	10	3.26	.78
Printing/photocopying periodicals	166	175	35	12	3.28	.75
Creating an optional account on the library homepage	119	112	100	57	2.76	1.04
Aggregate Mean/SD					3.26	.51
Criterion Mean					2.50	

It is evident from Table 2 that the aggregate mean of 3.26 (Std. = 0.51) is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. This is because postgraduate students' usage of periodicals is high. Specifically, their activities involve searching for information (mean= 3.56), downloading from open access/database (mean= 3.37), locating multiple sources from periodicals (mean= 3.35), printing/photocopying periodicals (mean= 3.28), reading in the library/on-screen reading (mean= 3.26), retrieving periodicals from other websites (mean= 3.24) and creating an optional account on the library homepage (mean= 2.76).

Research Question Two: What are the purposes of using periodicals?

Table 3 shows the purpose for which postgraduate students use periodicals. Postgraduate students agreed that some of the reasons they use periodicals were for scholarly communication 361(93%), reading a wealth of knowledge 337(86.9%), for research options 337(86.9%), while about only 27 (7.0%) disagreed to these reasons.

Table 3: Purpose for using Periodicals

Periodicals	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Periodicals						
For scholarly publications	361	93.0	27	7.0	388	100.0
For evidence of claims	296	76.3	92	23.7	388	100.0
For current awareness	330	85.1	58	14.9	388	100.0
For information on local issues	300	77.3	88	22.7	388	100.0
For reading a wealth of knowledge	337	86.9	51	13.1	388	100.0
For political ideology stance	233	60.1	155	39.9	388	100.0
For entertainment	248	63.9	140	36.1	388	100.0
For a job advertisement	256	66.0	132	34.0	388	100.0
For bibliographic details	284	73.2	104	26.8	388	100.0
For in-depth knowledge	334	86.1	54	13.9	388	100.0
As a presentation solution	331	85.3	57	14.7	388	100.0
For research options	337	86.9	51	13.1	388	100.0

Research Question Three: How frequently do postgraduate students use periodicals?

Table 4: Frequency of Access to Periodicals

Periodicals	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Mean	STD.
Print format:						
Journals	219	109	46	14	3.37	.83
Magazines	150	162	61	15	3.15	.82
Newspapers	167	135	65	21	3.15	.89

Newsletters	150	115	73	50	2.94	1.04
Proceedings	123	129	87	49	2.84	1.01
Bulletins	126	137	74	51	2.87	1.01
Electronic formats:						
Electronic journals	227	78	45	38	3.27	1.01
Electronic magazines	200	93	50	45	3.15	1.04
Electronic newspapers	195	89	61	43	3.12	1.04
Electronic newsletters	169	82	65	72	2.90	1.16
Aggregate Mean/SD					3.08	.74
Criterion Mean					2.50	

Table 4 shows an aggregate mean of 3.08(Std. = 0.74), greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. This finding suggests that the postgraduate students' frequency of using periodicals is high. Most respondents indicated that they always or often use print and electronic periodicals.

6 Discussion of Findings

This study's findings indicate that postgraduate students of library and information science use periodicals for searching for particular information, downloading information from open-access databases, locating multiple sources from periodicals, and reading in the library. Searching for particular information is one of the core activities performed while using periodicals. This finding agrees with Olutoki and Osoba (2017), who noted that most postgraduate students search, browse and locate needed periodicals in the serials section. This is a vital discovery, placing students at the focal point of information provision. However, in contrast with the researcher's preliminary observation and Chimah et al. (2014), which opined that there is a decline in the usage of periodicals by postgraduate students in university libraries in Nigeria. The study also observed that the purpose for which postgraduate students use periodicals is for scholarly communication and in-depth knowledge. This agrees with Rao and Reddy (2018), which revealed that students use periodicals to facilitate their research.

7 Conclusion

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the activities postgraduate students of library and information science perform in the university libraries are searching for information, downloading materials from multiple sources, and reading in the library, which is an indication of usage of periodicals and the purposes of these activities were for scholarly communication with their colleagues and other counterparts, reading a wealth of knowledge and for research options which made them use periodical collections more frequently than can be imagined.

8 Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the authors recommend that:

1. The postgraduate students should intensify their efforts in using the periodicals made available in the library since they contain the most current and updated information.
2. Federal university libraries should ensure that they subscribe to more proactive and searchable databases annually.

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