Information Needs of Female Undergraduate Sandwich Students in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the information needs of female undergraduate sandwich students in Delta and Edo states of Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design and data were collected through a questionnaire administered to four hundred and twenty-nine female undergraduate students in three universities through purposive sampling technique. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages to answer the objective questions. The findings of this study include the following: Female undergraduate sandwich students need information to carry out class work and complete assignments. The majority of students agreed that they needed information for class work and assignments. Cybercafés were the major information centers visited during information seeking, with 203 (47.32%) responses. It is necessary that LICs operation hours should be extended. It is important that management of LICs should replace outdated and mutilated materials in the Libraries and malfunction computers in the cybercafés.

Keywords: Information, needs, Female, Undergraduate, Sandwich, Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Information is very important in the development of any organization or individual. Information is used to describe man’s accumulated knowledge in all forms and from all sources that could help the user to make rational decisions. Information acquisition, storage and dissemination could enhance societal growth (Aiyekpeku, 1983). Development information increases the intellectual knowledge of students, generally. This accounts for its importance during the period of seeking information in the course of a study.

According to Williamson (1995), information affects all areas of economic, social or cultural life. This is true because information is required for one to know what is happening in the economic, social, and cultural circles to keep the society moving. Williamson further stated that information is required by various groups of people irrespective of their ages to solve problems and to cope with different situations, as they are presented.

Information is an indispensable and essential ingredient for today’s social, economic, industrial, political and technological development. There is no aspect of a man’s life that does not require information. Information makes interaction among people possible (Afolabi, 1983). It is asserted that information is an ideology or a vehicle used to shape feelings or decisions. Information plays an important role in decision making by reducing the rate of indecision during the process of decision making. Information obtained from the Internet is fast, reliable and does not have restrictions on content or format and has limitless types of facilities which assist users to access the almost infinite information on the Internet (Popoola, 2003).

The needs of individuals vary. At the root of information seeking behavior is the concept of information need, which has proved intractable. Information and information need are inseparable, and interconnected. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, information need is an individual or a group’s desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. Belkin and Croft (1992) suggested that a search begins with a problem and a need to solve it. The gap between these is defined as the information need. Weights, Widdershoven, Kok, and Tomlow, (1993) in categorizing the different types of areas of needs, suggested the following.

a. Need for new information i.e. the desire to get or seek information that you do not know or have knowledge about.
b. Need to elucidate the information held i.e. ability to understand more of the information held by throwing light on the information previously held.
c. Need to confirm information held i.e. trying to seek information held as true.

The three categories of needs are in line with the academic needs associated with female undergraduate sandwich students. A female undergraduate sandwich student needs or seeks information to increase his knowledge, to confirm if the information held is true or false, and to complete a class work or prepare for examination. The process of information seeking is a continuous one until the female undergraduate sandwich students’ need is satisfied.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to examine the information needs and seeking behavior of female undergraduate sandwich students in three universities in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria. The specific objectives include:

a. To identify the areas in which female undergraduate sandwich students need information
b. To determine the information centers where female undergraduate sandwich students go to seek information

c. To ascertain the factors influencing the information seeking behavior female undergraduate sandwich students?

d. To ascertain the factors mitigating against the information seeking behavior of female undergraduate sandwich students?

e. To identify the problems encountered when seeking information.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In Nigeria, Sandwich studies are organized by universities with the aim of encouraging working class students, for example, teachers who have the Nigerian Certificate in Education (N.C.E) and other equivalent qualifications, to improve their skills and broaden their knowledge on a part-time basis. These female undergraduate sandwich students in Delta and Edo States belong to this category. Thus it is necessary to know their information needs and find ways in meeting such needs.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Boadi and Letsolo (2004) reported that the primary role of a woman is to take care of the home and the children. Even where the woman has a full-time occupation, she has to be home to serve the family after work.

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Devadason and Lingam (1996) enumerated various types of information needs, apart from expressed needs. There are unexpressed needs which the client is aware of but does not like to express. The concept of need is, of course, a psychological concept. It refers to a mental state and a cognitive concept. It also refers to the need to find order and meaning in the environment, which is expressed as the need to know. Curiosity, the desire to be informed, is usually the type of need students generally show in the information seeking process, especially when seeking information for class work, an assignment, or preparing for examination as supplements to the lecturer’s note.

Information need according to Shenton and Dixon (2003) means the desire or necessity to acquire in order to meet a purpose, facts, interpretation, advice, opinion or other forms of message such as seeking and acquiring information that can make the student pass examinations.

Wilson and Walsch (1996) argued that need is a subjective experience which occurs only in the mind of the person in need and consequently is not directly accessible to an observer and also stated that need emerges from three kinds of motives

* Physiological motives (for example, hunger and thirst).
* Unlearned motives (including curiosity and sensory stimulation) and
* Social motives (the desire for affiliation, approval, status or aggression).

Case (2002) described the typology of information need that focuses on how and why people come to ask questions at a library’s reference desk. He described four stages or levels as follows:

- Visceral need
- Formalized need
- Conscious need
- Compromised need.

The visceral need is the unexpressed need for information. The next level is ‘a conscious mental’ need; namely an ambiguous and rambling statement which sometimes result in talking to another person about it. The third level is when the inquirer may be able to construct a formalized (“qualified and rational”) statement of the need.

Factors such as age, marital status play a large part in women’s information needs. Thus the steps should be taken by the library to provide information services to women having different backgrounds in order to serve their various information needs. Information needs of female part-time learners are as varied as the students themselves. This is because no two individuals are exactly the same, not even identical twins. There must be a little variation, as also is the individual need.

Akporado (2010) opined that undergraduate sandwich students irrespective of their gender visited various information centers to satisfy their information needs. According to Adomi, Okiy and Ruteyan (2003) females make use of Internet services than males in seven of the cybercafés they surveyed.

Kakai, Ikoja and Kigongo - Bukenya (2004) stated that the main information demands that led undergraduate students irrespective of gender to seek information include: course works and assignments, preparation for examinations and tests and general reading to enhance lecture notes. Also that information seeking is an aspect of scholarly work which is of most interest to academic librarians, who strive to develop collections.

Uujuani, (2006) showed that although part-time students are aware of the library, due to time constraints and disproportionate less service to part-time students, there is low patronage of the library. The paper recommends a review of library policies in favor of part-time students particularly in the area of borrowing.
privileges, keeping the on-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) on till 10pm on weekdays as well as weekends.

Nwokedi (2006) who emphasized that a good library can help in promoting the development of reading skills and providing a framework for academic achievement and that a majority of students need information for assignments, for preparation of examinations, for subjects of interest and for general knowledge.

Rowland and Rubbert (2001) also argued that one of the major problems associated with part-time students is time constraints. They need special arrangements for library opening hours, closer liaison between departmental and library staff to ensure the availability of information resources via the Internet.

5. METHODOLOGY

The study examined the information needs of female undergraduate sandwich students in three universities in two states: Delta and Edo States of Nigeria. The universities are: University of Benin, Benin-City, Benson Idahoosa University, Benin – City and Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State. The study adopted a descriptive research design and data were collected using questionnaire administered to four hundred and twenty nine female undergraduate students in three universities through purposive sampling technique. The population was approximately 5,000 female sandwich students who were fully registered in the three universities 2009/2010 academic session. The sample size used was 10% of the population. The questionnaire was the instrument used to gather data. A total of 500 copies of questionnaire were distributed, at the end of the study only 429 copies of questionnaire were retrieved with a response rate of approximately 92 percent (92%), which was a very adequate response and used for the analysis.

Table 1: Respondents by institution distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Benin</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>68.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta State University, Abraka</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>71.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson Idahoosa University</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The female sandwich students were grouped in each of the three sampled universities, as shown in table 1.194 (68.79%) respondents were in University of Benin, 231 (71.08%) respondents in Delta State University, Abraka and 4 (66.66%) female in Benson Idahoosa University, Benin City.

Table 2: Areas in which female sandwich students need information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information needs</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information for Class work/Assignment</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information for examination</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>93.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information for General knowledge</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>78.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information regarding Project</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>51.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>27.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the female undergraduate sandwich students have diverse information needs, table 2 revealed that 429 (100.00%) respondents indicated that they need information for class work and assignments as a priority. Next 402 (93.71%) respondents agreed to needing information to prepare for examinations. That the females sandwich students need information to prepare for examinations and class work/ assignments was not a surprise because that is the major work of students. The unique roles they play as housewives and mothers in family, females’ Sandwich students need information quickly to attend to these academic activities before they devote their attention to other chores.

Table 3: LICs used by respondents during information seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LICs</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cybercafé</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>47.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University library in own institution</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>26.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public libraries</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other University libraries</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Private libraries</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 revealed that 203(47.32%) female’ undergraduate students use the cybercafé as centers of information during the process of seeking information as a priority. Cybercafés ranked higher because convenience is of uppermost importance to the female sandwich students, given their overall workload at the university and at home. Cybercafés are located at various places and one can use them when it is convenient to the person. Most undergraduate sandwich students generally use cybercafés because of sheer convenience. When the
research found that the university library is opened, that is when part-time students normally hold their lectures and when they are free to use the library, the library would have been closed.

One hundred and fifteen, 115 (26.81%) females used the university library as their information centre. The overall percentage of library usage is lower compared to the usage of cybercafés. This may be because the only available time to visit the library after the compacted lectures during the day is the time most females’ sandwich students rush home to cook or do other housework to prepare for the next day’s lecture. Use of public libraries ranked third, because most undergraduate female sandwich students in towns where public libraries are located occasionally patronized them.

The result however, is in line with those of Ujuabi 2006, Nwokedi 2006 and Kakai et al. 2004, stating that university library collections were inadequate in meeting users’ demand supported the result of this study. It was also reported that part-time students live far away from campus with limited access to on-campus library resources. Thus they make use any library, like public libraries, close to their place of abode.

Research Question three: How often do they visit the LICs when in need of information?

Table 4: Frequency of visit to LICs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>65.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>29.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>04.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>01.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be deduce from Table 4 that 279(65.03%) respondents attested to the fact that they visited these information settings (LICs) on a daily basis in the process of information seeking, 125(29.14%) visited weekly, while 6(01.40%) respondents affirmed not using them probably due to lack of time or they do not know what they can benefit from LICs.

What problems do female undergraduate sandwich students encounter when seeking information to meet their needs?

Table 5: Problems encountered by respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>96.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuitable location of LICs</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>92.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfriendly opening and closing hour of LICs</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>92.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowded environment of LICs</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>76.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tedious retrieval of material from LICs</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>71.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows the problems encountered by female sandwich students. Four hundred and fourteen 414 (59.97%) respondents indicated that lack of time as one of the major problem that militates against information seeking.

The lack of time is not unconnected with the tight schedule of the programme just as the name implies: Sandwich or compacted program and their biological and cultural roles as women. Even as sandwich students, they still go home to take care of the family especially at weekends.

The unsuitable location and Unfriendly opening/closing hour of LICs attracted 395 (92.07%) responses. Most sandwich students live far from the university environment. As part-time students, they usually live off campus in places of residence far from LICs and are not comfortable with the period of opening and closing of the library. This is as a result of the nature of females who are usually occupied during the day with compacted lectures and after the period of lecturers go home to take care of family affairs. This finding is supported by authors like [14  and 15] who reported that part-time students live far away from the on-campus library facilities and this is the reason why their patronage of the library is low, and also that the primary role of a woman is to take care of the home and the children. Even where the woman has a full-time occupation, she has to be home to serve the family after work.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that lack of time is one of the major problem female sandwich students’ encounters when they seek information to meet their needs due to the nature of the programme and their biological nature as women and mothers. Some of them indicated that the location and opening and closing hour of LICs hinders the process of obtaining information to satisfy their information needs. Universities establish LICs to support and pursue their aims and objectives as an organization. It is therefore necessary for the LICs to function effectively to fulfill their purposes for which they were established.

To make the role of LICs felt by all female sandwich students, it is necessary that LICs operation hours should be extended. Library staff should be advised to be more accommodating and approachable since their work has to do with serving the public. It is important that management of LICs should replace outdated and mutilated materials in the Libraries and malfunction computers in the cybercafés. There is need to purchase...
more current books and journals in other to satisfy user’s information need.

REFERENCES


