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Users' Perception of Legal Information Sources and Services in Judiciary Library: The Case of Rivers State Judiciary, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study examined users' perception of legal information sources and services in the judiciary library: a case of Rivers State Judiciary. A descriptive survey design was used. The population consists of 3,887 users of the judiciary library which includes judges, magistrates, state counsels, legal officers, and staff of the court registry. A simple random sampling technique was utilized to sample 1,650 respondents, and 1287 responses were retrieved indicating a 78% response rate. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Legal Resources and Services Scale" (LRASS) was used for data collection. Ethical standards governing data collection and treatment was strictly adhered to in sampling of respondents, data collection, and handling of data. Descriptive analysis of frequency count, percentages, mean score and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The findings show that resources and services are adequate, it was also found that challenges such as poor funding, poor internet connectivity, an attitude of staff, lack of qualified personnel, high cost of information materials among others are affecting the provision of information resources and services. Based on the findings, it was that recommended, periodic review of law library resources and services to identify need-based areas and dedicate available funds and time in addressing these areas, also, the government and management of law libraries should allocate more funds to the library for maximum performance in the provision of legal resources and services.

Keywords: Users Perception, Legal Information Sources, Services, Judiciary Library

1.1 Introduction

Judiciary is the third arm of the government that is saddled with the responsibility of interpretation and application of existing laws enacted by the legislative arm of the government for settlement of disputes among individuals, agencies, institutions etc. To facilitate this statutory obligation imposed on the judiciary

by the constitution as contained in Section 6 (b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), a resourceful library is established and stocked with legal information sources for efficient services delivery to enhance legal duties.

Olorunfemi (2015) described legal information sources as the lifeline upon which legal practice and scholarship rest on.

Espousing on the importance of the law library to the legal profession, Dada (2011) termed the law library as the laboratory for the legal profession. Tuhumwire and Okello-Obura (2010) documented that of all the professions, the law has the largest collection of books because a well-stocked reference law library is important to a lawyer, as well as to the judge in the administration of justice. The authors further explained that a lawyer will always make a poor submission if he does not refer to legal authorities, and a judgment will not be as rich without referring to previously decided cases as authorities. The effect of non-utilization of well-stocked law library resources by judges and magistrates entails that judgments and decisions reached upon by them may not hold, as they stand being quashed at appeal.

Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose (2011) depicted that law library provides an avenue through which legal sources (legal texts, indexes of law reports, case law and old files of similar cases in the past precedents) are accessed to validate the case or cases presented, and for the adoption of the new legal position or to reverse the previous court decisions. This implies that the performance of judges, magistrates, legal officers, lawyers etc., may be directly proportional to the legal information sources available and accessible to them.

The quality of services offered to the legal officers in the judiciary is related to the adequacy and currency of legal information sources held in the library. The effectiveness and efficiency of services provided in libraries are mainly determined by library users as recorded by Awoyemi (2014). Behling and Cudd cited in Awoyemi (2014) remarked that the library user is regarded as the most logical source to determine whether the library is playing its role satisfactorily or not. It was as a result of this that Perera (2005) documented that satisfying user needs is essential to the management of libraries. The

ultimate aim of an information provider such as the judiciary library is to satisfy users' information needs by providing them with the right information at the right time and through the right means such as Current Awareness Services, Selective Dissemination of Information, Indexing, etc.

The judiciary of Rivers State is an arm of Rivers State Government. The State Judiciary has the sole authority and responsibility for the interpretation and application of State's laws and also adjudication of disputes among individuals and government. The Rivers State judiciary consists of eight courts namely; the High Court Justice, Customary Court of Appeal, the Magistrate courts, the Customary Courts, the Juvenile Courts, the Revenue Courts, the Sanitation Courts and Mobile Courts. The judiciary is headed by the Chief Judge of the High Court of Justice. The Rivers State judicial system is made up of sections or Directorates. These include; the administration, litigation, appeals, documentation and library services etc. The library was established to support the objective of Rivers State judiciary which is to provide legal information sources to enhance qualitative judgment delivery. The legal information sources contained in Rivers State Judiciary consists of a complete set of Laws of Federation of Nigeria, (LFN), State laws, law reports, law textbooks, Reference sources, Halsbury Laws of England, gazettes, precedent books, law dictionaries, Encyclopaedia, Hansards, unreported judgments of Rivers State High Courts, Government Publications, Digest, E-journals, Internet/Computer sources, citators, non-print sources like Legalpedia, Law Pavilion, international sources such as Lexis-Nexis, Westlaw, Hein Online among others. The library is manned by a professional librarian, library officers and library assistants.

1.2 The Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore the perceived benefits of the judiciary library to the administration of justice in Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:

- i) examine the types of legal information sources available for use in the judiciary library.
- ii) determine the types of services that the library render to users.
- iii) examine the extent to which legal information services of the judiciary library is meeting the information needs of the patrons.
- iv) identify challenges affecting the provision of legal information services in the judiciary library in Rivers State.

2:1 Literature Review

The effectiveness and efficiency of services offered in the judiciary library are solely dependent upon the availability and accessibility of legal information sources. Legal information sources comprise federal legislations, state laws, foreign law publications, law reports, government publications, law journals, law textbooks, electronic resources (legal databases) commonwealth publications etc. Ejimofor (2009) refers to legal information sources as embodying, inter-related or structured data used for the practice, teaching and study of law as well as for the conduct of legal research. Legal information sources are classified into primary and secondary sources.

The primary sources comprise the law itself as enacted by the constituted authority empowered by the law such as constitution, law reports, statutes, codes, Acts, etc, that is the books of law rather than books on law. While the secondary sources are books on law, it includes law textbooks, journals and other sorts of publications that deal with law and not in themselves sources of legal authority. This means that the judiciary library should be comprehensive in collections to cover all areas

of law to meet the needs of the users.

Judiciary libraries are established to provide effective and efficient services to the users they are meant to serve. They offer numerous services to her clientele, according to Ojo (2007) such services include; circulating materials to eligible patrons under equitable policies, providing reference services, photocopying services, providing indexing and abstracting services covering the professional periodicals received in a library; providing current awareness services; selective dissemination of information (SDI); compilation of bibliographies and reading lists; noter-up services, provision of internet services and displaying newly received in an appropriate place and arranging book exhibitions on different themes appropriate to given occasion to bring its resources to the notice of its patrons or users.

Expressing on the importance of judiciary services, Ogundipe (2001) depicted that the concept of library service is the pivot upon which librarianship is built and that judicial officers depend solely on library resources and library services, that as a result of this, it becomes mandatory for the judiciary to have good library services. Quinn cited in Awoyemi (2014) remarked that providing quality service means being able to view services from the users' perspective and then being able to meet the users' expectations for service as such users define value.

Writing on the library resources and services Adeniran (2011) stated that libraries are established to provide information resources and services to meet users' information needs. It is on this note that Bamigboye (2007) recorded that a good library service is rated based on how satisfactorily it meets the users' needs.

One of the five laws postulated by Ranganathan as cited in Aguolu (2002) is that a library is a growing organism. It is as a result of this growth that Umar and Yahaya (2020) noted that changes become inevitable,

especially with the advent of ICT applications and evident in the way users access and utilize information, as well as how libraries are managing their information resources in the present age. These changes according to them have a positive impact on library operations.

It is against this background that Bhim (2010) documented that providing a service that is acceptable and meets the needs and expectations of its users is crucial for libraries. Awoyemi (2014) asserted that the assessment of the quality library service concerning users' expectations to determine whether their expectations are being met or not is equally important. The author further maintained that the success of any library depends on the extent of satisfaction of users. In doing this judiciary libraries need to evaluate their resources and services to ascertain the degree of satisfaction of the users. It is in line with this that Yang (2004) remarked that user satisfaction is based on the degree of perceived quality that meets users' expectations, as a result of this library management should from time to time evaluate the resources and services that they offer to their patrons.

Awoyemi (2014) submitted that this is the only way to assess users' needs and expectations as far as the services of a library are concerned. In line with this, Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2003) documented that periodic survey studies need to be done to evaluate all the existing resources and services since necessary measures can be taken in case users are dissatisfied. The whole essence of evaluating the resources and services over a period is to know whether libraries are meeting the information needs of the users. Lucas (2005) had it that measurement of library services is essential to determine the level of satisfaction of the users.

Ainoko and Boman (2013) remarked that budget cut is a major challenge facing law libraries it affects their functional roles of acquiring current resources. This has

occasioned the insufficient number of current textbooks and journals. This has made judiciary libraries no longer perform their prime function of providing current materials for research. Ainoko (2011) in a separate study stated that the issue of funding should not be limited to the initial establishment of law libraries but also, its maintenance. This means that funds should always be made available to enable law libraries to update their collections for the benefit of the users.

In his submission, Haruna (2006) stated that economic recession in the country with its attendant problems of hyperinflation and foreign exchange seems to have limited the ability of individual lawyers and law libraries to acquire needed information materials for utilization. The author added that this could be grave for the professional effectiveness of legal practitioners as it could hinder effective information transfer and in effect slows up the pace of work.

Lack of professionalism in the management of law libraries has been identified as a major problem affecting judiciary libraries. Enem (2014) depicted that non-professionals have been entrusted with the management of some of the judicial libraries, the effect is that the collections of such libraries were often lopsided. This is following Ainoko (2011) who reported that qualified personnel are sine qua non for effective and efficient service delivery as it takes the ingenuity of well-groomed information professionals to acquire relevant and up-to-date information resources appropriately to facilitate effective dissemination and as well preserve and maintain the same.

It is as a result of this that the bodies that regulate legal education in Nigeria, the Council of Legal Education (CLE) (2002) and National Universities Commission (NUC) (2018) have made it compulsory that law librarians in faculties of law must have a law degree and a professional degree in

librarianship. It is believed that such a librarian should be in a proper position to know the needs of the law faculty much better than a non-law degree holder. Such a librarian will be in a vantage position to make a sound judgment about the collections in the law library as well as take care of peculiar references of the researchers and students. If this position is adopted in the judiciary library it will go a long way in improving the performance of the library and at the same will allow users to have access to timely and accurate information. Having examined the problems affecting law libraries it will be proper to look at possible measures that could be put in place to address the aforementioned problems.

Adequate funding has been at the centre of the idea of establishing a standard law library. It is against this background that Dossett cited Anyaegbu (2011) remarked that with adequate funding, law libraries would be able to acquire all necessary information resources in both legal and other related disciplines to facilitate dispensation of justice at the court level, the promulgation of laws by our parliamentarians and enhancement of research in our legal institutions. This is in agreement with Ainoko (2011) documented that the issue of funding should not be limited to the initial establishment of law libraries but also its maintenances. This is in line with Umar and Yahaya (2020) in their study stated that adequate funds will enable the librarians to acquire current and high-quality law library

resources, such as law databases, automate library functions, improve internet connection, procure better broadband, and provide alternative power generating machines. They further maintained that this if provided will attract optimum utilisation of information resources.

Besides this, professionally qualified law librarians should be employed to man judiciary libraries such a person should be a law graduate and must have been called to Nigerian Bar and as well possess a professional librarianship qualification to achieve the purpose of establishing the judiciary libraries.

3:1 Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used for this study. The population consists of 3,887 users of the judiciary library which includes judges, magistrates, state counsels, legal officers, and staff of the court registry. A simple random sampling technique was utilized to sample 1,650 respondents, and 1287 responses were retrieved indicating a 78% response rate (see Table 1). A self-designed questionnaire titled "Legal Resources and Services Scale" (LRASS) was used for data collection. Ethical standards governing data collection and treatment was strictly adhered to in sampling of respondents, data collection, and handling of data. Descriptive analysis of frequency count, percentages, mean score and standard deviation were used for data analysis.

Table 1: Population and sample of the study

SN	Title	Population	Sampled	Retrieved	Percentage
1	Judges	34	20	15	1.2
2	Magistrates	52	30	21	1.6
3	State Counsels	401	200	151	11.7
4	Legal Officers	830	400	320	24.9
5	Staff of Court Registry	2570	1000	780	60.6
	Total	3887	1650	1287	100

4.1 Results and Discussion

Table 2: Available legal information sources in Rivers State Judiciary library

SN	Resources	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	\pm	Remarks
1	Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN)	691(53.7)	501(38.9)	48(3.7)	48(3.7)	3.43	.26	Available
2	State Laws	477(37)	501(38.9)	119(9.3)	191(14.8)	2.98	.26	Available
3	Law reports	405(31.5)	477(37)	191(14.8)	215(16.7)	2.83	.16	Available
4	Law journals	453(35.2)	501(38.9)	191(14.8)	143(11.1)	2.98	.22	Available
5	Legal and non-legal textbooks	358(27.8)	548(42.6)	286(22.2)	95(7.4)	2.91	.26	Available
6	Reference sources	238(18.5)	405(31.5)	477(37)	167(13)	2.56	.35	Available
7	Government publications	167(13)	405(31.5)	167(13)	548(42.6)	2.15	.33	Not available
8	Newspapers/magazines	119(9.3)	215(16.7)	358(27.8)	596(46.3)	1.89	.30	Not available
9	Legal e-resources	238(18.5)	667(51.9)	286(22.2)	95(7.4)	2.81	.50	Available
10	Hansards	215(16.7)	143(11.1)	334(25.9)	596(46.3)	1.98	.40	Not available
11	Gazettes	238(18.5)	715(55.6)	286(22.2)	48(3.7)	2.89	.42	Available
12	Civil Service Rules	215(16.7)	715(55.6)	215(16.7)	143(11.1)	2.78	.40	Available
13	Digest	72(5.6)	191(14.8)	238(18.5)	787(61.1)	1.65	.44	Not available
	Weighted mean					2.60		Adequate

N = 1287

Table 2 above shows that items 1, 2,3,4,5,6,9,11, and 12 (Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN), State laws, Law reports, Law journals, Legal and non-legal textbooks, reference sources, Legal e-resources, Gazettes, and Civil service rules) are available, while items 7,8,10, and 13 (Government publications, Newspapers/magazines, Hansards and Digest) are not available. Furthermore, the weighted mean score obtained as 2.60 is higher than the criterion mean score of 2.50, hence legal resources in Rivers State Judiciary library is adequately available. This finding shows that mainly legal information sources are made available for legal practitioners. Ejimofor (2009) refers to legal information sources as embodying, inter-related or structured data used for the practice, teaching and study of law as well as for the conduct of legal research, hence, law librarians understand the importance of legal resources to the legal profession in Rivers State.

Table 3: Library services available in Rivers State Judiciary library

SN	Services	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	\pm	Remarks
1	General reference	405(31.5)	548(42.6)	167(13)	167(13)	2.93	.50	Available
2	Noter-up	238(18.5)	572(44.4)	286(22.2)	191(14.8)	2.67	.47	Available
3	Index/Abstracting	286(22.2)	644(50)	215(16.7)	143(11.1)	2.83	.46	Available
4	Current Awareness Services	262(20.4)	620(48.1)	238(18.5)	167(13)	2.76	.43	Available
5	Selective Dissemination of Information	405(31.5)	691(53.7)	48(3.7)	143(11.1)	3.06	.50	Available
6	Legal Research	429(33.3)	548(42.6)	191(14.8)	119(9.3)	3.00	.49	Available
7	Compilation of Bibliographic	358(27.8)	667(51.9)	167(13)	95(7.4)	3.00	.50	Available
8	Routing of Current periodicals	310(24.1)	596(46.3)	286(22.2)	95(7.4)	2.87	.49	Available
9	Reading list	238(18.5)	620(48.1)	262(20.4)	167(13)	2.72	.42	Available
10	Issuance of library bulletin	334(25.9)	644(50)	191(14.8)	119(9.3)	2.93	.79	Available
11	Reprographic	238(18.5)	596(46.3)	358(27.8)	95(7.4)	2.76	.80	Available
12	Inter-library loan	72(5.6)	286(22.2)	524(40.7)	405(31.5)	2.02	.98	Not available
13	Translation	0	95(7.4)	358(27.8)	834(64.8)	1.43	.65	Not available
	Weighted mean					2.70		Adequate

N = 1287

The data in Table 3 revealed that services in items 1 to 11 obtained mean scores higher than the criterion mean score of 2.50, meaning that they are available services. These services are General reference, Noter-up, index/abstracting, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, legal research, a compilation of bibliography, routing of current periodicals, reading list, issuance of library bulletin, and reprographic services. Whereas, items 12 and 13 (inter-library loan and translation) are not available. Also, the weighted mean score of 2.70 shows that available services in the understudied libraries are adequate. This finding supports the assertion that libraries are established to provide information resources and services to meet users' information needs (Adeniran, 2011). The finding shows that the library provides adequate services for legal practitioners. It is on this note that Bamigboye (2007) recorded that a good library service is rated based on how satisfactorily it meets the users' needs.

Table 4: The extent to which legal information services of the judiciary library is meeting the information needs of the patrons

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	\pm	Remarks
1	Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN)	351(27.3)	780(60.6)	78(6.1)	78(6.1)	3.09	.71	Very High Extent
2	Law reports	429(33.3)	585(45.5)	195(15.2)	78(6.1)	3.06	.71	Very High Extent
3	State laws	624(48.5)	351(27.3)	234(18.2)	78(6.1)	3.18	.94	Very High Extent
4	Legal periodicals	351(27.3)	663(51.5)	156(12.1)	117(9.1)	2.97	.86	High Extent
5	Legal books	351(27.3)	468(36.4)	312(24.2)	156(12.1)	2.79	.81	High Extent
6	Government publications	273(21.2)	585(45.5)	312(24.2)	117(9.1)	2.79	.93	High Extent
7	E-journals and E-books	78(6.1)	117(9.1)	507(39.4)	585(45.5)	1.76	.88	Very Low Extent
8	Digest	117(9.1)	312(24.2)	663(51.5)	195(15.2)	2.27	.84	Low Extent
9	Citators	312(24.2)	546(42.4)	234(18.2)	195(15.2)	2.76	.84	High Extent
10	Legal encyclopaedia	351(27.3)	390(30.3)	273(21.2)	273(21.2)	2.64	.99	High Extent
	Weighted mean					2.73		High Extent

N = 1287

Table 4 shows that the respondents agreed that items 1 to 3 (Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, aw reports, and State laws) are meeting their information needs to a very high extent. Items 4,5,6,9, and 10 (Legal periodicals, Legal books, Government publications, Citators, and Legal Encyclopaedia) are meeting the information needs of the respondents to a high extent, Item 8 (Digest) to a low extent, and item 7 (e-journals and e-books) to a very low extent in meeting the information needs of the respondents. Furthermore, the weighted mean score of 2.73 was obtained, indicating that in general, the available resources are meeting the information needs of the respondents to a high extent. This shows that it is important to ascertain the extent to which the provided library services and resources meet the need of the user, as explained by Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2003) that periodic survey studies need to be done to evaluate all the existing resources and services since necessary measures can be taken in case users are dissatisfied. This is buttressed by Yang (2004) that user satisfaction is based on the degree of perceived quality that meets users' expectations, as a result of this library, management should from time to time evaluate the resources and services that they offer to their patrons.

Table 5: Challenges affecting the provision of legal information services in the judiciary library in Rivers State

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	\pm	Remarks
1	Inadequate funding	572(44.4)	405(31.5)	143(11.1)	167(13)	3.07	.90	Agreed
2	Lack of qualified law librarians	310(24.1)	524(40.7)	238(18.5)	215(16.7)	2.72	1.07	Agreed
3	Out-dated legal resources	405(31.5)	667(51.9)	167(13)	48(3.7)	3.11	1.01	Agreed
4	Gaps in Law reports	358(27.8)	548(42.6)	238(18.5)	143(11.1)	2.87	.94	Agreed
5	Inadequate legal periodicals	334(25.9)	667(51.9)	167(13)	119(9.3)	2.94	1.01	Agreed
6	Constant transfer of experienced library staff	429(33.3)	596(46.3)	191(14.8)	72(5.6)	3.07	.93	Agreed
7	High cost of materials	143(11.1)	739(57.4)	334(25.9)	72(5.6)	2.74	.91	Agreed
8	Lack of reprographic facilities	72(5.6)	262(20.4)	191(14.8)	763(59.3)	1.72	1.08	Disagreed
9	Inadequate collections	48(3.7)	691(53.7)	405(31.5)	143(11.1)	2.50	1.03	Agreed
10	Lack of internet connectivity	238(18.5)	572(44.4)	286(22.2)	191(14.8)	2.67	1.05	Agreed
11	Theft and mutilation of resources	286(22.2)	644(50)	215(16.7)	143(11.1)	2.83	1.11	Agreed
12	Attitude of library staff	262(20.4)	620(48.1)	238(18.5)	167(13)	2.76	1.08	Agreed
13	Inadequate ICT facilities	48(3.7)	691(53.7)	405(31.5)	143(11.1)	2.50	.95	Agreed
14	Inadequate e-resources	191(14.8)	548(42.6)	429(33.3)	119(9.3)	2.63	1.06	Agreed
15	Inadequate access tools	358(27.8)	667(51.9)	167(13)	95(7.4)	3.00	1.08	Agreed
16	Lack of inter-library loan	310(24.1)	596(46.3)	286(22.2)	95(7.4)	2.87	1.16	Agreed
		Weighted mean					2.75	

N = 1287

Table 5 shows the respondents' responses on the challenges affecting the provision of legal information services in the judiciary library in Rivers State. The respondents agreed with all the items except item 8 (lack of reprographic materials). Also, the weighted mean score of 2.75 shows that the challenges are affecting the service provider to a high extent. Some of these challenges have been reported by researchers as plaguing library service provision. Ainoko and Boman (2013) remarked that budget cut is a major challenge facing law libraries which affect their functional roles of acquiring current resources. Which accounts for the insufficient number of current textbooks and journals. Also, Legal Education (CLE) (2002) and National Universities Commission (NUC) (2018) have made it compulsory that law librarians in faculties of law must have a law degree and a professional degree in librarianship. This is a result of the challenge posed by the lack of qualified librarians.

Conclusion

The place of the library in society is incontestable. The library provides information resources and services to members of society in their respective careers and profession. This study examined users' perception of legal information sources and services in the judiciary library: a case of the Rivers state judiciary. The legal practitioners

in dispensing justice require all the information they can access for informed decision-making and professional growth. the law library has been specially set up to acquire resources and render services to support teaching, learning, and research in the legal profession. The findings show that resources and services are adequate being provided in the understudied location, also, significant

challenges such as poor funding, poor internet connectivity, the attitude of staff, lack of qualified personnel, high cost of information materials among others were found to be plaguing the law library services and resources. No doubt, every existing social institution has several challenges, however, to ensure maximum proficiency in legal proceedings and processes, these challenges must be reduced to the barest minimum. It is based on this finding that the paper recommended, a periodic review of law library resources and services to identify need-based areas and dedicate available funds and time in addressing these areas, also, the government and management of law libraries should allocate more funds to the library for maximum performance in the provision of legal resources and services.

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