ASSESSING THE USE OF LAW LIBRARY COLLECTIONS AMONG FINAL-YEAR LAW STUDENTS OF USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assessed the use of law library collections among the final-year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State, Nigeria. The research objectives among others include: to assess the purpose of using the law library by final year students, to determine the availability of law library collection and to identify the challenges faced by the final year law students in unitizing the law library collection. The research design of the study was descriptive survey and the population of the study comprises one hundred and twenty-three (123) law students of 2018/2019 academic session. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The findings revealed that law students used law library mostly for writing projects than reading, writing assignment, supplement lectures note writing project among others. The study revealed that law reports is the most available information in the law library compared to others such text books, journals, electronic resources and database. The study revealed that lack of standby generator is the major challenge faced by the final year law students in utilizing the law library collection. It was concluded that the final year law students used the library mostly for the purpose of writing projects. Despite the benefits of these library collections, the law library faced numerous challenges but lack of standby generator is the major challenge in the law library among the final-year students. The study recommends that, the law library should encourage the final year students to utilize other information resources such textbooks, reference materials, databases, among others. The faculty and law library should acquire more information resources and provided power back up in the library for effective service delivery.

Introduction

University libraries serve as essential repositories of resources that support teaching, research, and community development, providing critical access to information necessary for academic and professional growth (Vishala & Bhandi, 2009). In academic settings, both faculty and researchers rely heavily on these resources to enhance their scholarly activities. Krolak (2005) emphasizes that university libraries play a pivotal role in facilitating lifelong learning, enhancing literacy, and fostering critical thinking and informed citizenship. Ekere (2014) further supports this by noting that university libraries aim to advance the institution's objectives of promoting teaching, learning, and research, thereby serving a wide range of users, including undergraduates, postgraduates, lecturers, and other university members. This study specifically focuses on the library usage among undergraduate law students.

Hussain and Abdulwahab (2013) argue that evaluating a library's quality involves gathering user feedback, as users are the best assessors of the library's performance and services. The role of a university library extends to providing both local and remote access to diverse formats of collections to meet the research and information needs of its community. The faculty of law library, therefore, supports the broader university goals by catering to the specific needs of law students and faculty, while also serving others interested in legal materials (Popoola, 2008).

Law librarianship in Nigeria is deeply rooted in the legal profession, predating public librarianship (Ogbeide, 2016). Law libraries are crucial for supporting the educational, research, and community needs of the faculty by offering reference services, assisting with electronic resources, and ensuring the accuracy of legal information. Dada (2007) highlights the indispensable role of law libraries in the legal profession, likening their importance to that of an operating theatre for a surgeon. Law libraries are central to the functioning of law faculties and play a critical role in legal education and public access to legal information.

Ukpanah and Afolabi (2011) describe law libraries as vital collections of legal information organized for the use of legal professionals and students. They emphasize that law libraries are integral to the achievement of educational goals and excellence in law faculties. Law libraries contribute significantly to the legal system by ensuring access to quality legal information and supporting legal education. This study evaluates the usage of library collections among final-year law students at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State, Nigeria, highlighting the importance of adequate and well-maintained law collections in enhancing legal education.

Brief Description of the Faculty of Law of Usmanu Danfodiyo University

The Faculty of Law at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, established in the 1977/78 academic session, is distinctive for its integration of both Islamic Law and Common Law into its curriculum. The Faculty encompasses three departments: Islamic Law, Public Law and Jurisprudence, and Private and Business Law, providing a comprehensive legal education that meets contemporary needs. The educational experience includes problem-solving tutorials, Moot-Court trials, and clinical legal programs, equipping students with practical skills and real-world problem-solving abilities. The Abdullahi Fodiyo Library Complex, located on the main campus, is the central library and includes over twenty branch libraries, with the Faculty of Law library being one of them.

Statement of the Problem

Universities are pivotal in producing skilled and educated manpower for the nation. Since the establishment of the Faculty of Law at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, in the 1977/78 academic session, the Faculty has trained thousands of students across various law degree programs. Over time, the law library has evolved to better meet the information needs of law students, yet continuous evaluation of its resources is essential for enhancing its effectiveness. According to the National Universities Commission (1989), the adequacy of a law library's collections and services is critical for accreditation; inadequate resources can jeopardize the academic program. Despite significant investments in collection building, there are concerns

about the underutilization of the law library's resources, potentially impeding effective information service delivery. This underutilization could hinder students' academic performance. Recognizing these issues, the study aims to assess the use of the law library among final-year law students at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were as follows:

i. To assess the purposes of using the law library by final-year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State;
ii. To determine the perceived availability of the collections in law library
iii. To identify the challenges faced by the final year law students against the use of law library collection

Research Questions

The study seeks to provide answer to the following questions:

i. What are the purposes of using the law library collections by final-year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State?
ii. What are the collections available in Faculty of Law library as perceived by final-year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State?
iii. What are the challenges faced by final-year law students in the use of law library collections at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State?

Scope of the Study

This study assessed the use of law library collection among the final-year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State, Nigeria. The study covers only the final-year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto 2018/2019 Academic Session. This means that the study focused on those final-year students in the academic session. Specifically, the study will be limited to only the final-year students. The final-year students were considered because they are adjudged to have more experience with the use of the Faculty of Law library compared to those in the lower level.

Review of Related Literature

Onwudinjo (2015) conducted a study on the utilization of law library collections by undergraduate students at the Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Employing a descriptive survey method, the study included a population of 550 registered library users for the 2013/2014 academic session. A sample of 132 students, representing all levels from 100 to 500, was surveyed, with a 100% response rate. The analysis revealed that most law students visited the library at least twice a week for exam preparation. The study recommended that the law library should be adequately stocked with current and relevant law resources and that the reading environment should be improved to enhance learning and research.

Khan, Bhatti, Ghalib, and Ismail (2014) surveyed the utilization of resources, services, and facilities at the Central Library of the University of Peshawar. The findings showed that most respondents visited the library for studying, reading books, consulting reference materials, and retrieving unpublished documents. While respondents were generally satisfied with the library's services, including lighting, ventilation, reading tables, and staff behavior, they noted major issues such as a lack of e-resources, inadequate collections, and insufficient physical facilities. The study aimed to provide a foundation for improving library services at the University of Peshawar and similar institutions.

Popoola (2008) investigated faculty awareness and use of library information products and services in universities across South-West Nigeria. Using a systematic random sampling method, the study surveyed 446 faculty members from a total population of 4,459, achieving an 89.7% response rate. The study found a significant disparity in faculty awareness of available library resources and services. Faculty members often lacked sufficient knowledge about resources pertinent to their teaching and research activities. The research indicated that greater knowledge of library services correlated positively with their usage, faculty status, and membership in library-related committees.

Uluocha (2015) examined the impact of legal information resources use on the research productivity of law lecturers in Nigerian universities. Adopting a descriptive survey research design and multistage sampling technique, the study surveyed 414 lecturers from 16 law faculties across Nigeria. The findings showed that legal information resources, including law reports, legal periodicals, statutes, and e-resources, were used daily by law lecturers and significantly contributed to their research productivity.

Bhatti, Farwa, and Sobia (2013) assessed the frequency and purposes of library usage by LIS students at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Data were collected from 64 respondents via questionnaires. The study found that students typically visited the library once a week for reading, completing assignments, and preparing for exams. They preferred library books over reference materials, journals, and theses. Most respondents were satisfied with circulation and reference services but faced issues such as electricity failures, limited computer access, and slow internet connectivity. Despite these challenges, the library's services were generally well-received.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. This design was deemed fit for the study as it described the actual situation regarding to assessing the use of law library collection among the final-year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprises all the final year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State. The population of the study comprises one hundred and twenty-three (123) students of 2018/2019 academic session. The entire population was used as the sample of the study, because the population was not too large. The instrument used for data collection was four liker scale questionnaires. The questionnaire was validated by three experts of field of Library and Information Science who compared items in the research instrument with the research questions and determined their appropriateness. The inputs of the three

experts were incorporated together and used for the study. The researchers personally went to the faculty of law library Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto and distributed the questionnaire to the respondents. The data collected was analyse using mean and standard deviation to interpret the findings results.

Results

Research Question 1: To assess the purposes for using the law library by final year law students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, question was asked on the purpose of using the library and their response are shown in the Table below:

Table 1: Purposes for using the law library

S/N	Statements	X	SD	Decision
1	To write assignment	3.00	.96	A
2	To read library books	3.04	.91	A
3	To use internet facility	3.04	.91	A
4	To read newspapers	3.04	.94	A
5	To read journal articles	3.00	1.00	A
6	To supplement lecture notes	3.04	.91	A
7	To write projects	3.07	.92	A
8	To prepare for seminar presentation/moot court	3.04	.91	A
9	To photocopy materials	3.00	1.00	A
10	To prepare for examinations	2.96	.91	A
	Cluster Mean	3.02	.93	A

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree

Table 1 reveals that law students utilized the library for various purposes, including writing projects (mean = 3.07, SD = 0.92), completing assignments (mean = 3.00, SD = 0.96), reading library books (mean = 3.04, SD = 0.91), and using internet facilities, among others. The means and standard deviations for these activities ranged from 2.96 (SD = 0.91) to 3.07 (SD = 0.92), all above the average mean of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.02 suggests that law students predominantly use library materials for research and other academic activities. Notably, final-year students most frequently visited the law library for writing projects.

Research Question 2: What are the library resources perceived to be available in law library?

Table 2: Availability of Collection in Law Library

S/N	Item Statement	AV	NA	Decision
1	Textbooks	102(91.1%)	10(8.9%)	AV
2	Journals	101(90.2%)	11(9.8%)	AV
3	Law reports	103(92%)	9(8%)	AV
4	Statutes, laws decrees	98(87.5)	14(12.5)	AV
5	Reference materials	10(8.9%)	11(9.8%)	NA
6	E-mail facility	101(90.2%	11(9.8%)	AV
7	Electronic database	101(90.2%)	11(9.8%)	AV
8	Projects	95(84.8%)	17(15.2%)	AV
9	Newspapers	94(83.9%)	18(16.1%)	AV

10	Magazines	93(83%)	19(17%)	AV

Key: AV= Available and NA= Not Available

Table 2 indicates that the law library has a range of available materials, including textbooks, journals, law reports, statutes, and law decrees. The frequency and percentages of these materials ranged from 93 (83%) to 103 (92%), exceeding the accepted percentage of 50%. However, the study found that reference materials are inadequately available, with a very low percentage of 10 (8.9%), falling below the accepted percentage of 50%. This suggests that law reports are the most readily available information resources in the law library.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by final year law students against the use of law resources in the library?

Table 3: Challenges faced by final year law Students in utilizing the law Library Collection

S/N	Item Statement	X	SD	Decision
1	Inadequacy of desired materials	3.07	.88	A
2	Inadequacy of law reports	1.92	1.03	D
3	Lack of internet access	3.03	.87	A
4	Poor electricity power supply	3.08	.80	A
5	Poor ventilation	1.63	.74	D
6	Lack of quiet and conducive environment	1.49	.81	D
7	Lack of adequate seating spaces	1.63	.96	D
8	Unfriendly attitude of library staff	1.67	.99	D
9	Lack of standby generator	3.25	.87	A
10	Restricted library opening hours	3.18	.91	A
	Cluster Mean	2.39	.88	D

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree

On Table 3 above, the study revealed that inadequacy of desired materials, lack of internet access, poor electricity power supply, lack of standby generator and restricted library opening hours were the challenges faced by the final year law students while using the library resources with agreed mean and standard deviation ranging between x=3.03; SD=.87 and x=3.25; SD=.87 which is above the average mean (2.50). These findings indicated that lack of standby generator as the major challenge in law library.

Summary of the Findings

i.   Finding on objective one shown that final year law students used the law library most frequently to write projects.
ii. Findings on objective two shown that law reports are the most available information resources in the law library.
iii. Finding on objective three shown that lack of standby generator is the major challenge in the law library.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that final-year law students at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, utilize the law library for a variety of purposes, including reading books and journals, writing assignments, preparing for exams, supplementing lecture notes, and working on projects. The primary use of the library for writing projects highlights the students' understanding of the library's role in supporting their academic work. This finding contrasts with Onwudinjo (2015), which reported that law students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University primarily used the library for exam preparation. This difference may be attributed to the fact that final-year students are more engaged in project writing, whereas students in earlier years may focus more on exam preparation.

Khan, Bhatti, Ghalib, and Ismail (2014) found that library use among their respondents was primarily for studying, reading books, consulting reference materials, and retrieving unpublished documents, which does not specifically focus on final-year students.

The study revealed that the law library offers several important resources, including textbooks, journals, law reports, electronic resources, and databases. Law reports were identified as the most available resource, aligning with Uluocha (2015), who noted that legal information resources such as law reports, legal periodicals, legislation, and statutes were frequently used by law students in Nigerian universities. This suggests that law reports are particularly valuable to students in their academic pursuits.

However, the study also identified several challenges faced by students, including inadequate information resources, poor internet connectivity, and a lack of a standby generator. The lack of a standby generator was noted as the major challenge, which diverges from Popoola (2008), who reported that final-year students faced issues with awareness of available information resources and services. This discrepancy suggests that while students at Usmanu Danfodiyo University are aware of the resources available, power outages hinder their access, particularly during times when a generator is needed.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the presence of a law library within the Faculty of Law is a critical resource for final-year students, other students, and staff. The library is predominantly used by final-year law students for writing projects. It was found that the library has a greater availability of law reports compared to other resources such as books, journals, and reference materials. This could be attributed to the importance of law reports in presenting court cases, which helps students develop skills related to court precedents. Despite the advantages offered by the library's collections, it faces several challenges, with the lack of a standby generator identified as the most significant issue affecting final-year students.

Recommendations

The faculty of law library should encourage final year law students to not only patronize the library for project writing only but rather utilize the library for other academic purposes such reading, research, group discussion etc. This can be achieved through current awareness services, clippings, social media news broadcast and organized students' orientation.

The law library should ensure that other information resources such text books, journals, serial publications, reference resources amongst others are available in the library. This can be done through different methods of acquisition such direct purchase of information resources, donation, exchange, gift, legal deposit, bequest, among others.

The faculty of law and the law library should as a matter of urgency and necessity provide standby generator or any power back up for the library to extend closing hours.

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