Information Environment of Tutors in Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Mathew Terfa Chorun, Helen Tor-Akweer & Patience Mwuese Tarzaan

Abstract

The study was carried out to determine the information needs, seeking behavior, sources, and perceptions on the state of the school libraries and challenges of accessing information by Tutors in Public Secondary Schools (TPSS). It adopted survey research method with questionnaire as the tool for data collection, which was administered on all TPSS in the affected schools, collected and analyzed with descriptive statistics. It was discovered that the information needs of the TPSS are mostly on their subject areas and contemporary methods of teaching, developments and inventions in science and technology, medical and health information, information on educational issues and furthers studies as well as on things happening around the world. The online environment shapes their information seeking behavior and was main avenue through which they access information. Their perception on the poor state of libraries in their schools is an issue of concern, as it acts as a challenge to their access to information. Recommendations were put forward on ways to remedy the situation.

Key words: Information environment; Tutors in public schools (TPSS); School libraries; information needs; information access.

Introduction

The society exists with various classes and groups of individuals such as farmers, tutors, civil servants, researchers, traders, artisans, corps members, and the like. These individuals operate in different directions and dimensions based on their missions, aims and objectives, thereby contributing their various quota towards the growth and development of the society. Their contributions, however, largely depends on their access to relevant, timely, accurate and precise information, thus necessitating investigations on their information environments.

Information environment is a concept that has to do with factors surrounding availability, access to and use of information by individuals in the society. These factors include information needs, information sources, information seeking behaviour, perceptions of information systems, and the challenges of accessing and utilizing information and its resources. According to Mooko and Aina (2007), investigations in the context of information environment includes not only the information needs, but also the information seeking behaviours, access to information and sources of information used for meeting the information needs of users, which could either be

heterogeneous like rural inhabitants and artisans or homogenous like students, professionals, policy makers, researchers and lecturers. Uhegbu (2007) posits that understanding a user's information environment will help to place the information provider in a better stead to appreciate the psychology of a user in relation to his information seeking behaviour.

A study on the information environment will investigate issues surrounding pattern of information seeking, use and perceptions of information sources in the society. Information environment of Tutors in public secondary schools (TPSS) in the case of this study are limited to their information needs, sources, seeking behaviour, challenges of accessing information as well as their perceptions of school libraries. The need for information brings about information search of reliable sources for the satisfaction of the information needs. Ajiboye and Tella (2007) see information seeking behavior as the way and manner people gather and sought for information for their personal use, knowledge update and personal development. Users may be limited by the organization they work for, by the nature of their work or profession, by age sex or other social groups. An understanding of the users' nature and information seeking patterns will assist in the prescription, improvement and efficiency of information services when necessary. The information seeking behavior and pattern of using information retrieval systems depends on a number of factors. Some of the general points that affect the information environment of users are: the users' awareness and ability to access other sources of information; the users' relationship with the information unit (may be a library) concerned; the information unit's ease of accessibility; the users working conditions; the time available to the users for consulting information sources; the amount of competition that exist in the user's field of activities; the user's past experience or knowledge; how friendly, knowledgeable and efficient are the members of the information unit; and the various products and services of the information unit (Onwuchekwa, 2012).

According to Tahir and Mahmood (2008), the study of information environment as it relates to information needs and gathering behavior dates back to 1948 when Bernal and others presented a paper on scientific information at the 1948 Royal Society conference. During the past 30 years or so, a considerable body of literature has been produced dealing with information needs and information-seeking behavior of both individuals and groups in a variety of contexts (Anwar, Al-Ansari, & Abdullah, 2004). Also, many studies have been conducted to investigate the information-seeking behavior of library users based on their information environment, subject interest, occupation, and geographical location. Information needs and information-seeking behavior of academics have also been a popular area of research for the information scientists for decades (Majid & Kassim, 2000).

In Nigeria, some investigations have taken place on the information environment of various classes of individuals in the society (Adekunmisi, 2005; Odusanya & Amusan, 2003;Gbadamosi, 2005;Nwagwu & Oshiname, 2009; Otolo, 2006; Ofuoku, Emah & Itedjere, 2008; Mooko & Aina, 2007;Igbeka & Atinmo, 2002; Ajiboye & Tella, 2007; Etubi, 2011; Ossai, 2011; Folorunso & Haruna, 2005; Ibrahim & Olorunfemi, 2008; Nwagwu & Iheanatu, 2011; Issa, Abdulkareem, Isah & Kupolati, 2011), but none has been carried out specifically on Tutors in Public Secondary Schools(TPSS) Nigeria. According to Bitso and Fourie (2011), information environment studies

on tutors in Africa are still limited. The importance of understanding users' information needs and information-seeking behaviour in order to point the way to innovations in information services led to an investigation on the information environment of tutors in Nigeria with particular reference to public secondary schools in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. Understanding information environment of users as it relates to needs, seeking behaviour and sources can result in the development and provision of information services that better serve the users' information needs (Bronstein, 2010). Thus, there is a necessity and a justification for the study to fill the Identified gap.

Makurdi is a metropolis, an administrative town, and one of the twenty three local government councils in Benue State of Nigeria. The metropolis is housing a Federal University of Agriculture, a study centre of the National Open University (NOUN), a State University, a Nigerian Army School of Military Engineering as well as many primary and secondary schools. The following is a list of public secondary schools in Makurdi, used for the study:

1. Government Model secondary school, Makurd;i
2. Government College, Makurdi;
3. Government Secondary school North Bank;
4. Government Secondary school, Air Force Base;
5. Government Girls College ,Makurdi;
6. Government Secondary school, Tatyough.
7. Special science senior secondary school, Makurdi;
8. Mount Saint Gabriel's Secondary school, Makurdi;
9. St. Joseph's Technical college, Makurdi;
10. Mt. Camel College, Makurdi.
11. Anglican secondary school, Makurdi.
12. NKST secondary school, Makurdi.
13. Methodist High school, Makurdi..
14. Community Secondary school, Makurdi;
15. Community Secondary school Apir, Makurdi;
16. Padopads Harmony secondary school, Makurdi;
17. Ogri Okoh Memorial college, Makurdi;
18. Tille Gyado College, Makurdi;
19. Gaadi Comprehensive college, Makurdi;
20. Calm Wisdom college, Makurdi and
21. Golden college ,Yagba-Makurdi

The subjects taught at this level require the services of tutors in public secondary schools (TPSS) to impart knowledge of the various subjects in students. Meanwhile, these tutors need constant and unhindered access to information that is timely, accurate, precise and relevant in order to carry out their responsibilities effectively. It is in view of the foregoing that this study intends to answer the following questions:

i. What are the information needs of TPSS in Makurdi?
ii. What are the information seeking beshaviour(s) of TPSS in Makurdi?

iii. What are the sources of information used by TPSS in Makurdi?
iv. What are the purpose and reasons for their information seeking?
v. What is the perception of TPSS on the state of libraries in their schools in Makurdi?
vi. What are the challenges faced by TPSS in getting access to information in Makurdi?

Research Method
The study adopted survey research design with a structured questionnaire as the tool for data collection. The self-structured questionnaire has part A, which is on the demographic data of respondents and part B, which deals with the study objectives, with an aspects on modified four-point likert scale. No sample and sampling technique was adopted, as the exact population of the tutors was not known. The various schools were visited on several occasions and the questionnaire administered to the affected tutors. This was done with the help of trained research assistants. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data.

Data Analysis
On the whole, 190 copies out of the total questionnaire that was administered returned properly filled, and were used for data analysis.

Table 1: Information Needs of Respondents

S/N	Information Needs of TPSS	Frequency	%
1	Information on my subject of specialization and contemporary teaching methods	68	36
2	Information on education issue and further studies	49	26
3	Information on better job opportunities and business	41	22
4	Information on good medical and health issues	51	27
5	Information on politics, social and economic issues	23	12
6	Information on entertainment and sports	23	12
7	Information on religious and cultural maters	30	16
8	Information on things happening around the world	49	26
9	Information on protection of human right	42	22
10	Information on current trends in teaching	54	28

N=190

Table 2: Behaviour and Attitudes of Respondents while Seeking Information

S/N	Information Seeking Behaviour and Attitudes	Frequency	%

1	Looking for somebody to assist you.	44	23
2	Asking question from people around	44	23
3	Going to the school library to search for materials.	53	28
4	Using Internet to browse	66	35
5	Listening to electronic media	56	30
6	Discuss with professional colleagues	46	24
7	Buying newspapers / magazines.	27	14

N=190

Table 3: Information Sources Used by Respondents

S/N	Information Sources utilized by TPSS	Frequency	%
1	My school library and others libraries	46	24.21
2	Radio and Television stations	64	33.68
3	Newspaper stands to read news and magazines	35	18.42
4	Internet at cybercafés	74	38.94
5	Professional colleagues	42	22.11
6	Government ministries/parastatals and NGO's	18	9.47
7	My place of worship	23	12.11
8	Conferences, Seminars, Workshops	62	32.63

N=190

Table 4: Purpose and Reasons for Seeking Information by Respondents

S/N	Purpose and Reasons for Seeking Information by TPSS	Frequency	%
1	Making lesson notes for teaching	62	32.63
2	updating knowledge and being current	71	37.36
3	carrying out research work	53	27.89
4	improving reading habit and other personal ambition	50	26.32
5	entertainment and leisure	24	12.63

N=190
Table 5: Perceptions of Respondents on the State of Library in Schools

1	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
No library in my school.	Strongly Disagree		37	19.47
	Disagree		31	16.32
	Strongly Agree		64	33.68
	Agree		58	30.53
Total			190	100

2	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
The library in my school is not functional.	Strongly Disagree		33	17.37
	Disagree		35	18.42
	Strongly Agree		63	33.15
	Agree		59	31.10
Total			190	100

3	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
No current information resources in my school library.	Strongly Disagree		35	18.42
	Disagree		38	20.00
	Strongly Agree		52	27.37
	Agree		65	34.21
Total			190	100

4	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
Management of the school is not giving library attention.	Strongly Disagree		31	16.32
	Disagree		38	20.00
	Strongly Agree		58	30.53
	Agree		63	33.18
Total			190	100

5	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
There are no ICTs and internet connectivity in my school library.	Strongly Disagree		47	25
	Disagree		44	22
	Strongly Agree		58	32

		Agree	62	35
Total			190	100

6	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
There are no teacher librarian/qualified library professional in my school library.		Strongly Disagree	33	17.37
		Disagree	53	27.89
		Strongly Agree	49	25.79
		Agree	55	28.95
Total			190	100

7	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
I do borrow books from my school library.		Strongly Disagree	57	30.00
		Disagree	63	33.16
		Strongly Agree	34	17.89
		Agree	36	18.95
Total			190	100

8	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
I visit my school library to read books and magazines.		Strongly Disagree	56	29.43
		Disagree	68	35.79
		Strongly Agree	32	16.84
		Agree	34	17.89
Total			190	100

9	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
The furniture in my school library is in bad shape.		Strongly Disagree	32	16.84
		Disagree	40	21.05
		Strongly Agree	60	31.58
		Agree	58	30.52
Total			190	100

10	State of library		Frequency	Percentage
New library should be built with functional		Strongly Disagree	12	6.32

facilities and qualified personnel.	Disagree	17	8.95
	Strongly Agree	69	36.32
	Agree	92	48.42
Total		190	100

Table 6: Challenges Encountered by Respondents While Seeking Information

S/N	Challenges Encountered by TPSS While Seeking Information	Frequency	%
1	Lack of information materials and resources in my school library 53 58.9	53	27.89
2	High cost of accessing information on the Internet	52	27.37
3	Poor computer and internet skills	42	22.11
4	Inadequate time for searching information	45	23.68
5	Cost of others information sources	41	21.58

N=190

Findings and Discussion

The findings have shown that the information needs of Tutors in public secondary schools (TPSS) are mostly on their subject areas and contemporary methods of teaching, medical and health information, information on educational issues and furthers studies as well as on things happening around the world. See Table 2. This is in line with Table 4 which shows their purpose and reasons for seeking information as to update their knowledge and remain current, preparation of class notes for teaching, carrying out research works and experiments as well as improvement of reading habits and personal ambition. These information needs and purpose of information seeking by TPSS may be attributed to the demands of their professional duties as tutors. As imparters of knowledge, they are meant to be up-to-date so as to impart same in students.

Table 3 and Table 4 revealed the information seeking behaviour and attitudes of TPSS as well as their information sources. These are mainly on the online environment – the Internet, with radio stations and television channels. The preference for the Internet concurs with the findings of Obuh (2009) that the attitudes of information users are focused online for desktop access to electronic information resources. That was why Ajala (2007) opined that information users resort at a much greater cost to Internet cybercafés to satisfy their information needs, because they are aware of what the Internet provides. Williams & Coles (2007) found that teachers rely on readily available sources in their schools. This is where the issue of availability comes in. The case of radio and television as information source may be attributed to easy availability in their

respective homes. As noted by Uhegbu (2007), availability is one of the major factors that determine the information sources to be consulted for the satisfaction of information needs.

The state of libraries (where existing) in public secondary schools (PSS) in Makurdi is not encouraging. As shown in Table 4, the perception of TPSS to the condition of libraries in their schools is nothing to cheer. This is because the school library is meant to be the major information source for the tutors to satisfy their information needs and purpose of information seeking so as to be able to impart result-oriented knowledge in students. But the condition of those libraries is a threat to secondary education in Makurdi and by extension Benue state and Nigeria in general. There are cases of unavailability and malfunctioning of school libraries, lack of management attention to libraries, absence of computers and Internet connectivity, un-conducive reading desks and chairs and lack of qualified librarians. These are in tandem with the findings of Adetoro (2004), Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011) and Gbadamosi (2011). The challenges encountered by the tutors while seeking information as shown in Table 7 are related to the poor condition of their school libraries and high cost of accessing information on the Internet. However, as revealed in Table 6, 92 (48.42%) of the respondents advocated for the establishment of new libraries in their schools with functional facilities and qualified staff.

There is no doubt that availability and utilization of information resources by TPSS will contribute significantly in our drive for development. This is premised on the fact that they are individuals entrusted with the future of the nation at hand, to lay solid educational foundation in students. These tutors have various information needs in order to properly execute the responsibilities given to them by the government, but it is unfortunate that their major source of information, the school library, can be generally described as nowhere to be found. This will no doubt rubbish the bring back the book (BBTB) initiative (www.bringbackthebook.org) of President Goodluck Jonathan, that is geared towards reviving poor reading habit among Nigerians. How can we bring back the book, whereas the home of knowledge and the major tool for developing reading culture, libraries, are in shambles in our public secondary schools across the federation? It is only when a tutor reads and acquire knowledge that he will be able to impart same in the students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be seen from the study that TPSS have various information needs, exhibit information seeking attitudes and use information sources for their information needs. Meanwhile, their perception of the state of libraries in their schools is an issue of concern, due to the fact that the libraries are meant to be their major information source. The study also identified challenges affecting access to information by the tutors and noted that the bring back the book initiative by the federal government will be an effort in futility without a coordinated approach for the development of standard libraries in public secondary schools in Nigeria. As a result of the findings, the study made the following three recommendations:

    i. Governments at all levels should rise and live up to their responsibilities in repositioning the education sector in Nigeria. Benue State government should establish libraries in all public secondary schools in Makurdi and by extension across the state. The state government can liaise and partner with Makurdi local government in the process, with adequate and current information resources, Internet connectivity and qualified human resources. This will enable the tutors to have unhindered access to information for the satisfaction of their

information needs, and be able to inculcate excellent knowledge in the students who are leaders of tomorrow.

  ii. .Parent Teacher Associations, Community organizations and various unions in Makurdi town should consider the adoption of self-help approach to the development of libraries in public secondary schools in the metropolis.

  iii. Establishments and organizations in Makurdi should explore the development of school libraries as part of their corporate social responsibility (Banks, Industries and other private sector initiatives).

References

Adekunmisi, S. O. (2005). The information needs and information seeking behavior of academic staff in the college of agricultural sciences, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ayetoro, Ogun State. *Journal of Library and Information Science,* 2(1 & 2).

Adetoro, N. (2005). A comparative analysis of school library development and use in selected public and private secondary schools in Ijebu and Remo Geo-political zones of Ogun State. *Lagos Journal of Library and Information Science.* 3(1), 7–15.

Adigun, G. O., Mohammed, Z., & Temboge, A. (2010).Accessibility and usage of scholarly information sources by faculty members and postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. *The Information Manager,* 10(1&2), 1–8.

Ajala, I. O. (2007). Internet awareness, accessibility and use by undergraduate and postgraduate students in Nigerian universities: a case study of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho, Nigeria. *The Information Technologist,* 4(2), 147–162.

Ajegbomogun, F. O., & Salaam, M. O. (2011). The state of school libraries in Nigeria. *PNLA Quarterly*: 75(3). Retrieved from www.pnla.org

Ajiboye, J. O.,& Tella, A. (2007). University undergraduate students' information seeking behavior: Implications for quality in higher education in Africa. *The Turkish Online Journal of Education Technology,* 6(1). Retrieved from www.tojet.net/articles/v6i1/614.pdf.on 24/8/2014

Anwar, M. A., Al-Ansari, H., & Abdullah, A. (2004). Information seeking behaviour of Kuwaiti journalists. *Libri,* 54(4), 228–236.

Bitso, C. L. M. & Fourie, I. (2011). Information-seeking behaviour of in-service secondary level Geography Teachers in Lesotho. Mousaion: *Journal of Library and Information Science,* 29(2), 173 – 194.

Bronstein, J. (2010). Selecting and using information sources: source preferences and information pathways of Israeli library and information science students, in Proceedings of Information Seeking in Context Conference, 28 September - 2 October. University of Murcia, Spain. pp. 61-76.

Etubi, M. (2011). Information needs and information seeking behaviour of Arabic Studies students in the University of Jos, Nigeria. *Gateway Library Journal,* 14(1), 39 – 46.

Folorunsho, A. L. & Haruna, I. (2005). A survey of the information needs and seeking behaviour of Kwara State House of Assembly legislators. *Middle Belt Journal of Library and Information Science,* 5(2), 52 – 60.

Gbadamosi, B. O. (2005). Comparative study of information requirements, seeking strategies and utilization of educational administrators and medical doctors in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Owena Journal of Library and Information Science,* 2(1), 10 – 24.

Gbadamosi, B. O. (2011). A survey of primary school libraries to determine the availability and adequacy of services for the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Oyo State, Nigeria. Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 6(2). Retrieved from www.ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/../EBLIP on 21/7/2014

Ibrahim, R. O. & Olurunfemi, D. Y. (2008). Information needs and information seeking behaviour of members of Oyo State House of Assembly Ibadan, Nigeria. *Middle Belt Journal of Library and Information Science*, 8(1&2), 54 – 62.

Igbeka, J. U. & Atinmo, M. I. (2002). Information seeking behaviour and information utilization of agricultural engineers in Nigeria based on their different places of work. *Nigerian Libraries*, 36(1), 9 – 22.

Issa, A. O., Abdulkareem, M.Y., Isah, A., & Kupolati, K.S. (2011). Information needs of public library patrons: a survey of Kwara State Library Ilorin, Nigeria. *PNLA Quarterly*: the Official Publication of the Pacific Northwest Library Association, 75(3). Retrieved from www.pnla.org 0n 21/8/2014

Majid, S., & Kassim, G. M. (2000). Information-seeking behaviour of International Islamic University Malaysia Law Faculty Members. *Malaysian Journal of Library & Information Science,* 5(2), 1 – 17.

Nnadozie, C. O. & Nnadozie, C.D. (2008). The information needs of faculty members in a Nigerian private university: a self-study. Library Philosophy and Practice. Retrieved from ww.unllib.unl.edu/LPP/nnadozie_nnadozie on 23/ 8/2014.

Mooko, N., & Aina, L. O. (2007). Information environment of artisans in Botswana. *Libri* 57, 27 – 33

Nwagwu, W.E. & Iheanetu, O. (2011). Use of scientific information sources by policy makers in the science and technology sector of Nigeria. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science,* 21(1), 59 – 72.

Nwagwu, W. E. & Oshiname, R. (2009) Information needs and seeking behavior of Nurses at the University College Hospital, Ibadan, Nigeria. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science,* 19(1), 25 – 38.

K. N. Igwe; M. B. Aliyu; E. O. Ukah (2013). Higher Education of Social Science, 4(2), 1-7 Philosophy and Practice. Retrieved from http://www.unllib. unl.edu/lpp/obuh.htm on 9/9/2014.

Odusanya, K. O. & Amusa, I. O. (2003). Information needs & information seeking habits of science lecturers at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria. *Lagos Journal of Library & Information Science,* 1(2), 50 – 55.

Ofuoku, A. U., Emah, G. N. & Itedjere, B. E. (2008). Information utilisation among rural fish farmers in Central Agricultural Zone of Delta State, Nigeria. *World Journal of Agricultural Sciences,* 4(5), 558 – 564.

Onwuchekwa, E. O. (2012). Organisation of information and the information retrieval system. In: Tella, A., & Issa, A.O. (Eds.). Library and information science in developing countries: contemporary issues (pp 275 – 282). Philadelphia, USA: IGI Global.

Ossai, N. B. (2011). How law students utilise information resources: A case study of the University of Benin, Benin City. *International Journal of Library and Information Science,*3(1),1–14.Retrieved from http://www. academicjournals.org/ijlis/Ossai.pdf on 9/9/2014.

Otolo, P. E. (2006). Agricultural information needs of rural women farmers in Nigeria: a case study of oil producing communities in Delta State, Nigeria. *Communicate,* 8(1), 11 – 20.

Oyediran-Tidings, S. O. (2004). Information needs and seeking behaviour of library Users at Yaba College of Technology Lagos, Nigeia. *Lagos Journal of Library and Information Science,* 2(4), 77 – 88.

Tahir, M. & Mahmood, K. (2008). Information needs and information seeking behaviour of arts and humanities tutors: a survey of the University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. *Library Philosophy and Practice*. Retrieved from www.unllib.unl.edu/LPP/tahir_mahmood on 9/9/2014

Uhegbu, A. N. (2007). *The information user: issues and themes* (2nd ed.). Okigwe, Nigeria: Whytem Publishers.

Williams, D. & Coles, L. (2007). Evidence-based practice in teaching: an information perspective needs. *Journal of Documentation,* 63(6), 812 – 835.

 Mathew Terfa Chorun and **Helen Tor-Akweer** are with Francis Suleman Idachaba Library, University of Agriculture, Markurdi while **Patience Mwuese Tarzaan** is of the Medical Library, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria. The authors can be reached at mathewchorun@yahoo.com.