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Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of the Postgraduate Students at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja

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Abstract

The study investigated the information needs, and the information seeking behaviour of NILDS postgraduate students, the sources consulted, barriers, as well as ways to improve their information seeking experiences. The study adopted a descriptive survey method. The target population was all the postgraduate students of National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) and random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents. The study opted the use of questionnaires and data was analysed using frequency tables and percentage. The major findings of the study are: the postgraduate students' information needs are various but the highest information need is for academic purposes. The students use sources such as textbooks, journals, Internet, and rely heavily on human resources for information. The studies also found that the students encounter a lot of challenges in meeting their information need but ranking highest is the lack of space in the library and not understanding the library's shelf arrangement/classification scheme. On the strategies to enhance their information seeking experience, the students said there is the need to increase the copies of important books, need for library orientation for fresh students, and increase borrowers' privileges among others.

Keywords

Information, Information needs, Information seeking behaviour, Postgraduate students,

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Introduction

Information is a basic need of human beings that is required in all walks of life. People need information for decision making and it is one of the essential commodities needed by mankind at all times. Information is an important tool used in the realization of any goal set by an individual or group. According to Kadir, Johari, and Hussin (2018), it is valuable resources required in any society, therefore acquiring and using information are critical and important activities. The essence of using the library is to source information for whatever purpose the clientele wishes. Academic work for students, especially at the postgraduate level is no doubt, very cumbersome and as such, students have to constantly be up-to-date in their area of study. Thus, they require lots of information and resources to enhance their academic activities. Information is, therefore, a very crucial tool, especially for students, and how they seek and use the information are key determinants to their performance. Understanding the information needs of library clientele is important for planning and providing top-quality library services, thereby avoiding thereby avoiding misallocating resources. When librarians understand users' information-seeking behaviour, they can adjust their services and resources to suit that of the users, and thus offer better services (Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2005). The decisions, concerning which communication channels and information systems will be used, as well as in which way and how they will be used, constitute the information-seeking behaviour of a user.

Information seeking behaviour can be described as an individual's manner of sourcing information and updating knowledge. When one thinks about information-seeking behaviour it includes the purpose for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought, how it is sought and what are the sources used to find information. The primary purpose for seeking information is to seek out relevant information about the fulfilment of a selected goal or information need. Olsen and Diekema (2012) mentioned that studying the way students find information is essential in helping them find research information more effectively and providing resources for their use.

The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) is an organ of the National Assembly of Nigeria established by an Act of Parliament. President Goodluck Jonathan signed into law the National Institute for Legislative Studies Act 2011 on March 2nd 2011. The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) builds on the successes of the Policy Analysis and Research Project (PARP), established in 2003 as a capacity-building institution of the National Assembly with the financial support of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). To expand the Institute's support to democracy and governance, the Governing Council approved the establishment of the department of Democratic Studies in 2016. On January 26th, 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari signed the National Institute for Legislative Studies (Amendment) Act, 2017, and the institute's name was amended to 'National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies. The Institute, in affiliation with the University of Benin, is accredited to award the following postgraduate degrees in Master's in Legislative Drafting; Legislative Studies; Parliamentary Administration; and Elections and Party Politics. For this purpose, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) desires to attract students from across the country and beyond for postgraduate studies on legislative and democratic related areas. The institute, in collaboration with the library therefore, must provide the appropriate information to meet the academic and personal information needs of the students for continuous attraction and retention. Therefore, adequate knowledge about the information needs and

seeking behaviour of this users' group is vital for developing library collections, services and facilities to meet users' information needs effectively.

Statement of the Problem

The primary aim of any library is to meet the information needs of its users and this is achieved by providing adequate information materials and services in an orderly and accessible manner. This research aims to investigate the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of NILDS postgraduate students, the result of which may assist the institute in providing excellent information services for her postgraduate students. The problem of this study therefore is "what is the information needs n information seeking behaviour of NILDS postgraduate students?"

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of postgraduate students of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the barriers the students encounter in meeting their information needs
2. determine the information needs of NILDS postgraduate students
3. survey the information-seeking behaviour/ how the students seek and obtain information
4. determine the information sources that the postgraduate students mostly use
5. determine strategies on how their information needs can be met better.

Research Questions

This research is aimed at finding possible responses to the following questions:

1. What are the information needs of NILDS postgraduate students?
2. How do the students seek and obtain information?
3. What are the information sources that the postgraduate students mostly use?
4. What are the main barriers the students encounter in meeting their information needs?
5. What are the strategies to meet their information needs better?

Literature Review

Information is needed by people to obtain answers to specific questions. The need for information arises from the need to know. Aina (2004) posited that "every individual whether literate or not, has information needs" Yusuf (2012) described information need "as an individual or group desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or an unconscious need". George et al, (2006) stated that information need varies among disciplines and by programs which depends on the respondent. Postgraduate students need academic information, information for research activities and employment-related information (Yahaya, 2019). Olorunfemi (2018) also said that the information needs of international postgraduate students were identified as information on the course of study and research-related needs. Baro, et al (2010) also said that the information needs of students include academic information, personal information and sports information. To satisfy an information need, the individual starts from the seeking of information that leads the user to search for formal or informal information sources, based on individual purposes and need and that often manifests in the seeking behaviour.

Information seeking behaviour can be described as a way and manner that an individual source and gather information to satisfy their information needs. Information-seeking behaviour is taken into account as purposive in nature, being a result of the necessity to satisfy specific objectives (Kundu, 2017). Igwe, (2012) on his part, posits that information-seeking behaviour is an individual's way and manner of gathering and sourcing information for personal use, knowledge update and development.

According to Olorunfemi (2018), the major sources of information are books, internet, and journals. Yahaya (2019) found that books remain a popular source of information to the students followed by the internet. He added that browsing websites and search engines are the most preferred methods for finding information while e-reference books and e-journals are the types of electronic information sources browsed on the internet. He also noted that the problems encountered are lack of a sufficient number of copies of books and non-availability of latest editions of books. According to Singh, Kumar, and Khanchandani (2015) students seek information through the internet and books. They also found that students encountered the barriers of few computer terminals in the library, old/outdated materials, and problems in using the library catalogue/OPAC.

Methodology

A survey research method was used to carry out this study. The target population of this study comprised all the postgraduate students of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies. The total population of the study was 239 postgraduate students of NILDS. The instrument used for data collection in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used for collecting data for this research because Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) are of the view that the questionnaire is widely used and it is a useful instrument for collecting survey information providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher and often comparatively straight forward to analyze. Random sampling method was used to select 60 respondents, questionnaires were administered via google Forms, thus making it easy and convenient to obtain responses, and a total of 50 were returned representing 83% return rate. The data derived was analysed using frequencies and percentages.

Results and Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents based on course of study, year of study, qualification, and area of research interest. They are presented from figure 1-4.

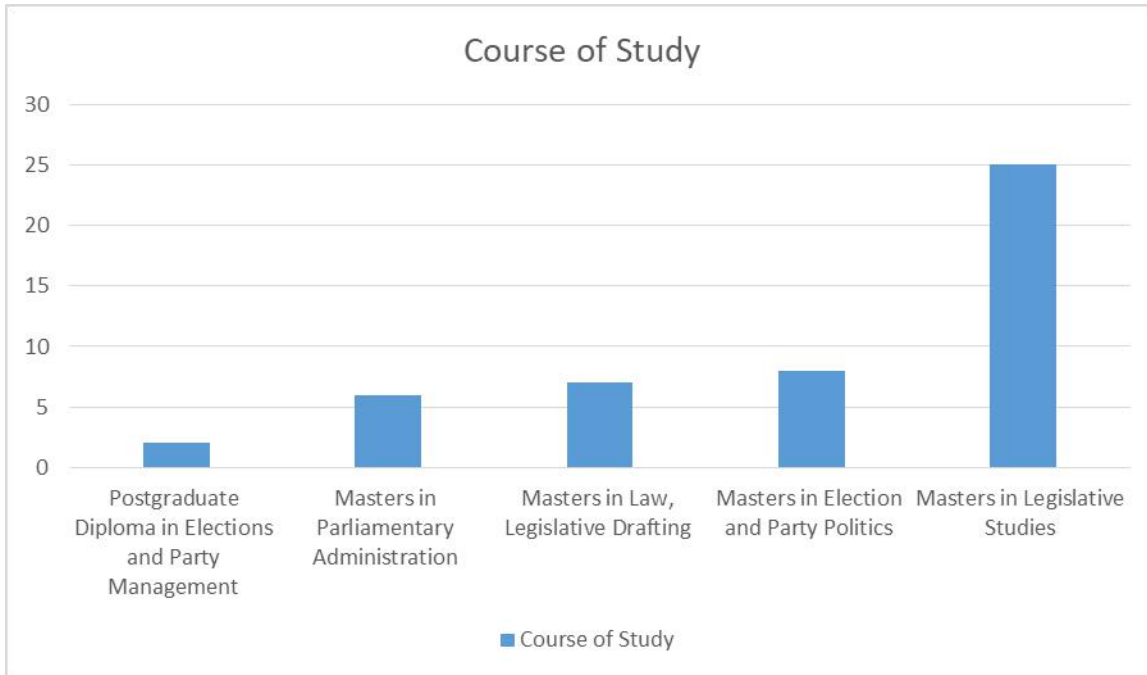


Figure 1: Course of Study

Figure 1 shows the course of study of the respondents with 27 (54%) from the department of legislative studies, 8 (16%) were from the department of Election and Party Politics, 7 (14%) from Legislative drafting, 6 (12%) from Parliamentary Administration, and 2 (4%) were from the postgraduate diploma in Elections and Party Management. Thus, majority of the respondents were from the department of Legislative Studies.

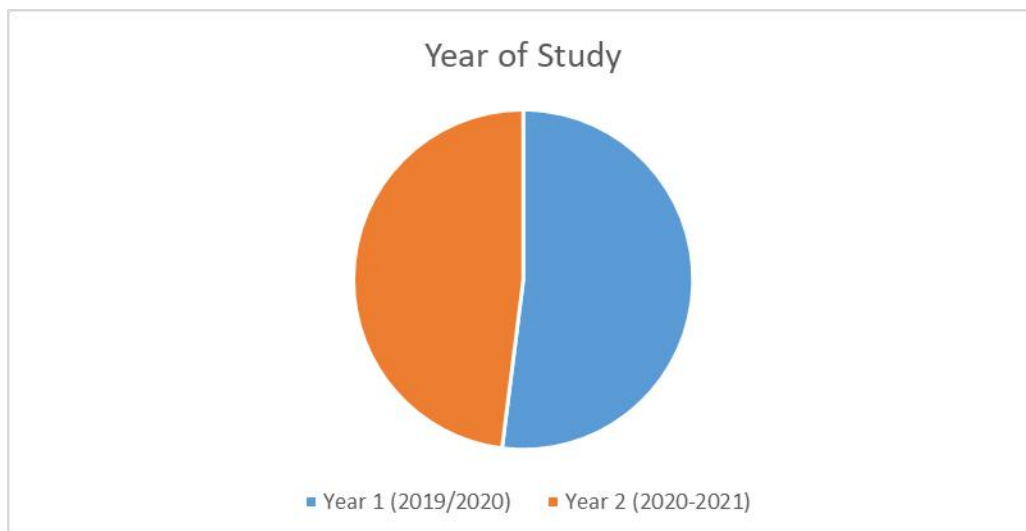


Figure 2: Year of Study

Figure 2 shows that 26 (52%) of the respondents were in their first year of study while 24 (48%) were in their second year of study. Thus, majority of the respondents were in their first year of study.

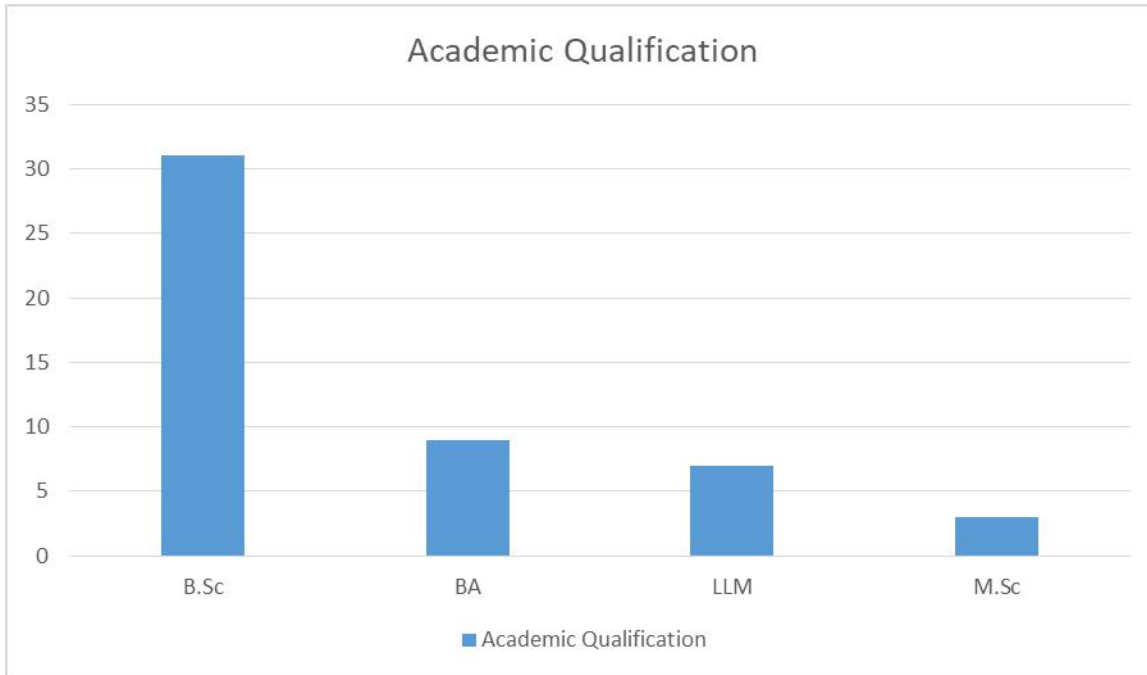


Figure 3: Academic Qualifications

Figure 3 shows that 31 (62%) of the respondents have Bachelor of Science (B.sc), 9 (18%) have Bachelor of Arts , 7 (14%) have LLB, and 3 (6%) of the respondents have their Master of Science. Thus, there are more Bachelor of Science degree holders than any other academic qualification.

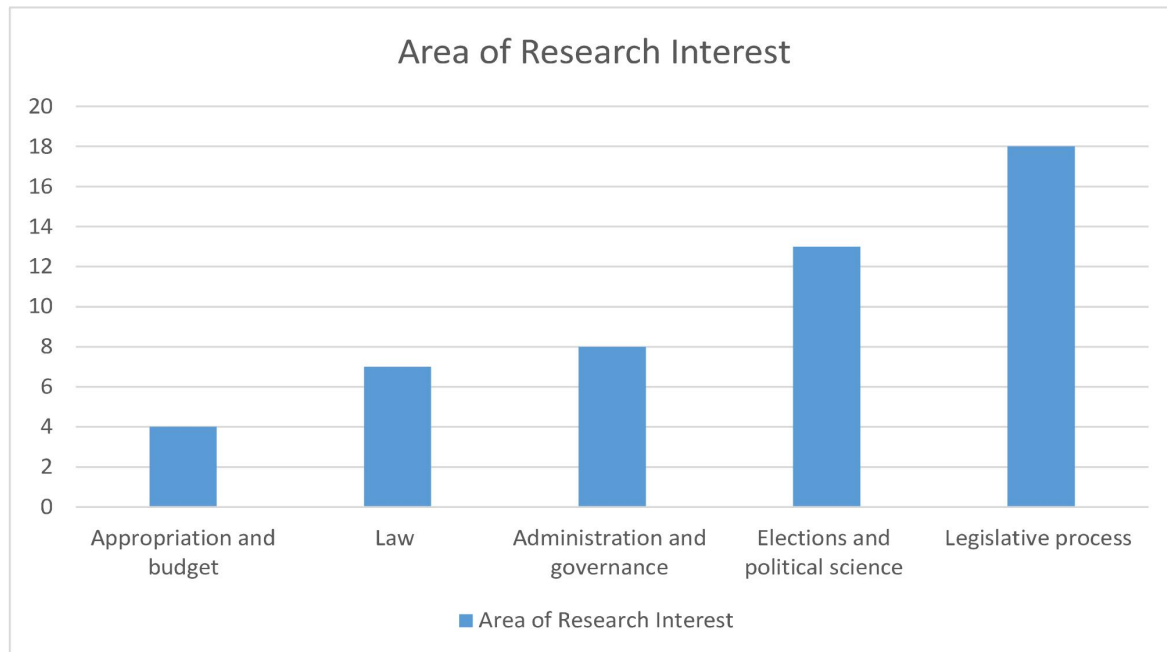


Figure 4: Area of Research Interest

Figure 4 shows that 18 (36%) of the respondents were interested in legislative process, 13 (26%) interested in Elections and Political Science, 12 (24%) interested in appropriation and budget, and 7 (14%) in law.

Inquiry into the information needs and information seeking behaviour of postgraduate students in NILDS.

Findings on the information needs and information seeking behavior of Postgraduate students at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja are presented in tables 1-4 below. In the descriptive analysis, agree and agree were collapsed together as agreed while strongly disagreed and disagreed were also collapsed together as disagreed. While table 5 was analysed differently according to the variables.

Table 1: Information needs of NILDS Postgraduate students

S/N	Item Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%
1	For academic purposes	50	100	0	0
2	Thesis & research	50	100	0	0
3	Personal development	43	86	7	14
4	International and global Information need	42	84	8	16
5	Medical and health information needs.	15	30	35	70
6	Social and entertainment	22	44	28	56
7	Political Information need	50	100	0	0
8	Religious and Cultural information need	25	50	25	50

It can be deduced from table 1 that academic purposes (50:100%); Thesss & research (50:100 %); Political information (50:100%); Personal development (43:86%); and International and global information need (42:84%) top the information needs of NILDS postgraduate students while medical & health information (15:30%); Social and entertainment (22:44%); and Religious and cultural Information (25:50%) ranks low among the information needs of the student.

Table 2: Information seeking behaviour/ how the students seek and obtain information

S/N	Item Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%
1	Visiting the Library	48	96	2	4
2	Browsing the Internet	50	100	0	0
3	Using the OPAC	24	48	26	52
4	Using shelf guides	39	78	11	22
5	Searching electronic database	29	58	21	42
6	Using manual Catalogues	13	26	37	74
7	Seeking Librarians' assistance	45	90	5	10
8	Inquiring from lecturers	47	94	3	6

Table 2 reveals that browsing the internet (50:100%); visiting the library (48:96%); Inquiring from lecturers (47:94%); seeking Librarian's assistance (45:90%); and Using shelf guides (39:78%) rank high in the information seeking behaviour of NILDS postgraduate students. Using OPAC (24:48%); searching electronic database (29:58%); and using manual catalogue (13:26%) rank low in the information seeking behaviour of the students.

Table 3: Sources of information mostly used by students

S/N	Item Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%
1	Electronic database	30	60	20	40
2	Print Textbooks	47	94	3	6
3	Print Journals	36	72	14	28
4	E-books	21	42	29	58
5	E-journals.	20	40	30	60

6	Newspapers	43	86	7	14
7	Reference materials (encyclopedia, dictionaries, abstracts, indexes, etc.	43	86	7	14
8	Internet Search engines	49	98	1	2
9	Theses & Dissertations	47	94	3	6
10	Past Question papers	46	92	4	8

In table 3 above, the data reveals that Internet search engines (49:98%); Print textbook (47:94%); Theses (47:94%); Past question papers (46:92%); Newspapers (43:86%); Reference materials (43:86%); Print journals (36:72%); and electronic database (30:60%) are the major information sources consulted by NILDS postgraduate students. While e-books (21:42%) and e-journals (20:40%) rank low.

Table 4: Main barriers the PG students encounter in meeting their information needs.

S/N	Item statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%
1	Difficulty in understanding the Library arrangement system	40	80	10	20
2	Inability to locate books on the library shelves	41	82	9	18
3	High Internet downtime	32	64	18	36
4	Lack of time	37	74	13	26
5	Inadequate current information materials	34	68	16	32
6	Inadequate space in the library	48	96	2	4
7	Lack of computer and internet searching techniques skills	38	76	12	24
8	Lack of user education programmes	43	86	7	14
9	Lack of assistance from the librarians	7	14	43	86
10	Inadequate library resources	35	70	15	30

It can be deduced from table 4 above that the highest barrier that NILDS postgraduate students face is inadequate space in the library (48:96%); Lack of user education programmes (43:86%); inability to locate books on the shelf (41:82%); difficulty in understanding library arrangement system (40:80%); lack of computer and internet searching skills (38:76%); Lack of time (37:74%); Inadequate library resources (35:70%); Inadequate current information materials (34:68%); with lack of assistance from the librarian (7:14%) ranking lowest.

Table 5: Suggestions on ways to help meet the information needs of Postgraduate students better

S/N	Item statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%
1	Library tours and orientation programs	46	92	4	8
2	Interlibrary cooperation	46	92	4	8
3	Creating a reference desk	46	92	4	8
4	Hand books/ guide books	46	90	4	8
5	Increase the copies of important text books	50	100	0	0
6	Increase of library opening hours	33	66	17	34
7	Increasing borrower's privilege	49	98	1	2
8	Access to more database	48	96	2	4
9	Using students' reading list as part of selection for acquisition	46	92	4	8
10	Extending borrowing privileges to journals	46	92	4	8

The data in table 5, reveal that increase in copies of important textbooks (50:100%) top the list. Other top suggestions are: increase borrowers' privilege (49:98%); access to more database (48:96%); library tours and orientation programs (46:92%) interlibrary cooperation (46:92%) creating a reference desk (46:92%) hand books/ guide books (46:96%)

using students' reading list as part of selection for acquisition (46:92%) extending borrowing privileges to journals (46:92%), and increase of library opening hours (33:66%).

Discussion of Findings

Information needs of NILDS Postgraduate students

Findings from the study indicate that the information needs of the postgraduate students of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies are mostly information for academic purposes, theses & research, among others. These findings are in agreement with Yahaya (2019), and Olorunfemi (2018), who said that students need information for academic purposes and research activities.

Information seeking behaviour/how the students seek and obtain information

On how the students seek information, it was found that they browse the internet, visit the library, inquire from lecturers and seek the Librarians' assistance to get the information they need. This agrees with Yahaya (2019); who found that postgraduate students use the library to get information. It also agrees with Singh, Kumar, & Khanchandani (2015) who said that students get their information through the internet, electronic resources such as databases, and the library.

Sources of information mostly used by students

The findings of the study reveal that quite a number of the postgraduate students of NILDS use sources such as the internet, print textbooks, theses, past question papers, newspapers, and reference materials. This is in line with Yahaya (2019) and Olorunfemi (2018) who opined that the major sources of information used by postgraduate students are books, the Internet, and journals. This is also consistent with Yusuf & Iwu (2010), who found that students use newspapers, reference materials, and electronic resources, past students' theses, textbooks, and journals to satisfy their information needs.

Main barriers the PG students encounter in meeting their information needs.

The major barriers that NILDS postgraduate students face are: inadequate space in the library, lack of user education, difficulty in understanding library arrangement system, lack of computer and Internet searching skills, lack of time, and inadequate library resources. This is in line with Yahaya (2019) who also found that the problems postgraduate students encounter are lack of a sufficient number of copies of books and non-availability of the latest editions of books.

Suggestions on ways to help meet the information needs of Postgraduate students better

On how to help meet their information needs and improve their experiences, increase in copies of important textbooks, increase borrowers' privilege, access to more databases, library tours and orientation programs, interlibrary cooperation, creating a reference desk, handbooks/ guides, using students' reading list as part of the selection for acquisition, extending borrowing privileges to journals and increase of library opening hours were given.

For further suggestions on how to improve their experiences, most students said that there should be library orientation for new students so that they can be taught how to use the library and the resources therein. They also said that the library does not have materials on Nigerian content. The respondents also asked that the library should provide more databases that can be accessed from any location as obtainable in other institutions outside the country, and that the resources at the e-section should be improved to avoid interruptions during information search.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The institute library plays a vital role in assisting the institute to fulfil its goals. The effectiveness of the library depends, to a large extent, on the ability to satisfy the information needs of the students, staff and other library users. This study fulfilled the research objectives and revealed that students of the NILDS Postgraduate School have varieties of information needs but most within academic pursuits. However, the students are hindered by the difficulty in understanding the library arrangement system, lack of user education, high Internet downtime, and inadequate space in the library, among others.

Following the findings of this study and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made to ease the information-seeking experiences of the NILDS postgraduate students.

1. Adequate user education should be given to the students on how to independently and effectively utilize the library. This will enable them to be acquainted with the library classification scheme and book shelving system and be able to retrieve materials easily.
2. Copies of important textbooks relating to their programmes of study should be increased to enable access by multiple people at the same time.
3. Students' reading lists should be used as part of the selection for acquisition, so that the materials acquired will be that which will help them get the information they need.
4. More databases should be subscribed to so that the students will have access to more resources virtually.
5. The institute should endeavour to procure more materials on Nigerian content to help the students with the local materials they need.

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